



## July - September Newsletter 2022

*The information in this newsletter is not a substitute for legal advice.*

# 50 years of Service and Support in Ohio

The Ohio Coalition is 50 years old! **Let's Celebrate!** This is the perfect time to reflect on our history, achievements, and look to the future. How does one celebrate a fifty-year milestone? For some, it is with a big party! For others, it is with gifts. In wedding anniversaries, the 50th is known as the golden anniversary. For the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (also known as the Coalition, or OCECD), the 50th anniversary is one that we celebrate by remembering and reflecting on our past, while anticipating the future. We observe our 50th anniversary with hearts filled with gratitude for those with whom we have worked, those who have volunteered, those children whom we have supported. We are grateful for those who came before us, who walked this very long and challenging road. It has not been an easy one. But every moment, every success, every time a good outcome came for a student or a child - that is the reason we celebrate and why our organization exists. We will continue advancing our efforts to ensure that every child with disabilities in Ohio has access to a meaningful and relevant education.

In the following pages you will read about the history of special education in the United States and Ohio. You will learn about the history of OCECD and its leadership. You will follow us over the years to see where we have been and learn about some of the members of our Governing Board. You will have a chance to meet the phenomenal staff that work at OCECD today. And finally, you will have the opportunity to read quotes from just a few of our collaborators and parents.

As a result, we hope you will be as encouraged as we are by the work of those who preceded us, and as honored as we are to continue that work with those who are here today, who are helping to take our organization into the next fifty years. We will be here, accompanying families, parents, students, children, and professionals, for as long as we are needed. We view the privilege of serving ALL with the greatest sense of responsibility. We are proud to support and serve and are as

committed today as the first group of parents and professionals who began this organization. Although we cannot name every individual who has been a part of our Coalition over the last fifty years, please know that we appreciate you and are grateful for your contribution. Thank you to everyone, to every single person, who has played a role in our organization. Thank you for making OCECD who and what we are today.

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## **A Brief History of Special Education in the United States**

With the multitude of special education resources and programs available today, it is amazing to learn that most of the United States' advancements in special education came into existence within the last fifty years. Learning about the history of special education will help you understand the important role that OCECD has played in the lives of families of children with disabilities in Ohio since 1972. For almost two hundred years, little was done nationally for students with disabilities. Even though President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 to provide national funding for education, only a relatively small number of children with disabilities were being educated in public schools until the 1970's.

The first national special education law was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, also known as Public Law 94-142. Margaret Burley played a leading role in the passage of this law. This law guaranteed that all students with disabilities had the right to a public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that best meets their individual needs. Based on the principle that "separate" does not mean "equal," the least restrictive environment ensures that students with special needs are educated, as much as possible, in general education classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, Public Law 101-336, reinforced PL 94-142 and expanded the disability categories to thirteen. These categories include autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language disability, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment, including blindness.

In 1997, IDEA was reauthorized as Amendments of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, Public Law 105-17. These amendments added more detail about who needs to be present during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. It also determined required paperwork and procedures. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) added more disciplinary standards, safeguards, and procedures.

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## **A Brief History of Special Education in Ohio**

Ohio's special education laws were enacted years before the federal law in 1975. The first comprehensive set of state standards for special education were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1960, covering all areas of disability. These standards included class size, age range, and teacher qualifications. Program standards were revised in 1962 to improve quality of education and added transportation. Additional standards for severe and/or multiple impairments were added in 1973 and included deaf-blind, autistic, and aphasic children. Standards that required identification, location, and evaluation of all children with disabilities became effective in 1977. These new standards rescinded a provision for legal dismissal from school attendance which had been made illegal under the federal law PL 92-142 in 1975.

The Rules for the Education of Handicapped Children became effective with all federal and state requirements in one document in 1982. This book of rules was often referred to as the "blue book" due to the color of the cover.

In 1998, the Ohio legislature rewrote special education law, which was changed from a "unit" or personnel-driven system of funding to a per pupil weighted system with an equity factor. Legislation also set caseload requirements into law. Ohio law was revised in 2002, and the title changed to Operating Standards for Ohio Schools Serving Children with Disabilities. School districts were given more flexibility, but ratios remained as first adopted in 1982. In 2008, the law was revised, and the title changed to Operating Standards for Ohio Educational Agencies Serving Children, Revised. Significant changes were made to align more closely with 2004 reauthorized



IDEA. The year 2014 brought new revisions and a new title: [Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities](#).

Today caseload ratios remain the same as first adopted in 1982; however, a committee has been appointed to recommend Ohio law changes that will provide more equitable access to services. Revisions to Ohio's [Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities](#), January 2022, will become effective for the 2022-2023 academic year.

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## **OCECD History**

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) was established originally under the name the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Handicapped Children, in 1972. It was founded by five parent/citizen groups along with three professional groups to advocate for the appropriate education of children with disabilities. The five parent/citizen groups were called Citizens Committees for Special Education from the following Ohio cities: Dayton, Toledo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus.

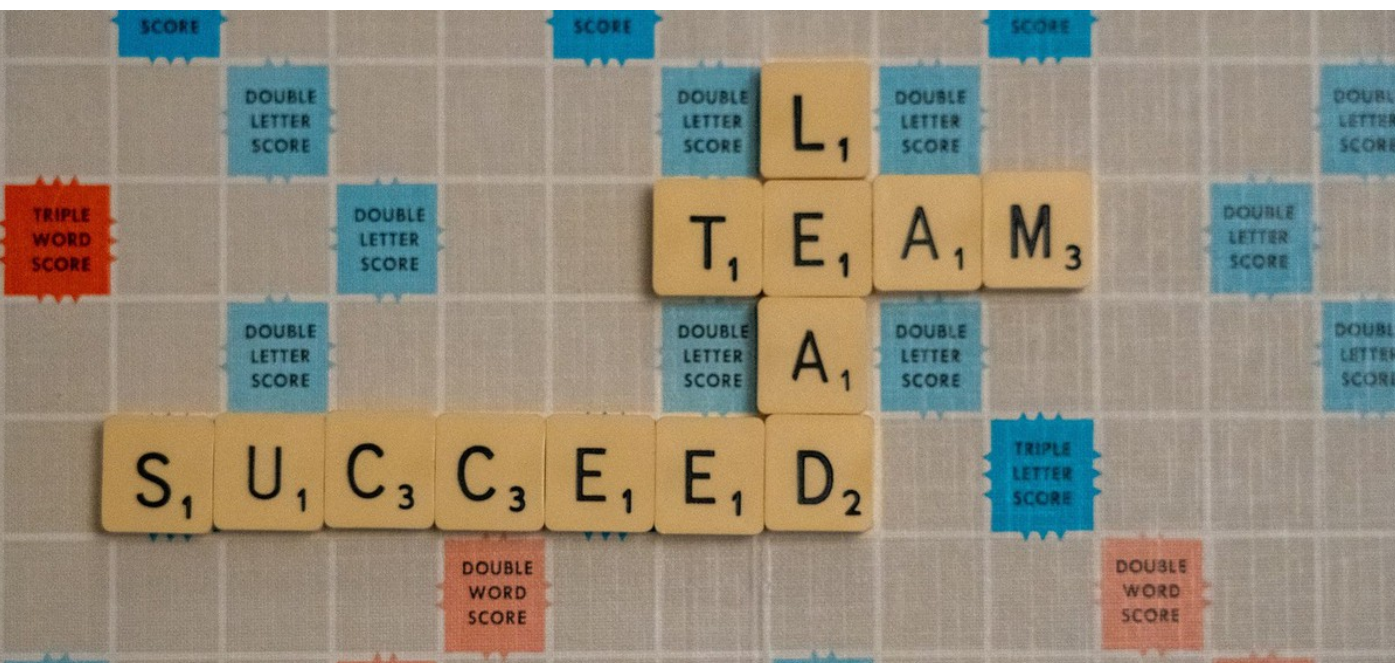
Originally OCECD was funded only by private donations from the parent and professional organizations. The groups formed the coalition because, like most states at the time, Ohio excluded many children with disabilities from public education. Unable to make progress in that public policy arena, the groups decided to come together to ensure that parents' voices were heard regarding significant public policy issues affecting children with disabilities. The professional

organizations, through the dues and donations of their members, provided the financial support for the parents who volunteered.

The OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN (O.C.E.H.C.) was incorporated in 1974 and became a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization. Margaret Burley served on the board, representing parents of deaf-blind children, until December 1979, when she became the Executive Director. The first 5 groups that formed the Coalition were the Council for Exceptional Children, Ohio Federation, Ohio School Psychologist Association, Ohio Speech and Hearing Association, Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, and the Association for Retarded Citizens. The Ohio Coalition staff and board wrote a grant proposal which was submitted to the Office for Special Education Programs in 1983, and OSEP funded the grant. This was the first time that the federal government provided any funds to OCECD.



Margaret Burley's son, Tom, was born in 1962 and had been diagnosed with Congenital Rubella Syndrome which left him blind and mentally challenged. She had to fight for educational services for him when he became of school age since his severe disabilities led the school district to determine that public education was inappropriate for him.



## Leadership

In 1983, the organization obtained its first grant from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to establish and carry out the work of the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Legislative Coalition. The Coalition worked with residential and day program service providers to represent the interests of persons with MR/DD. This activity continued until 1989.

It was in 1984 that the Ohio Department of Education, through the Division of Special Education, first funded the Parent/Educator Partnership Project, a program developed to provide a three-day training to parents and principals. The purpose of the program was not only to inform parents and educators about the requirements of P.L. 94-142, but also to establish collaborative working relationships between parents and educators. Also, in 1984 the Ohio Coalition was funded by the U.S. Department of Education to expand the Parent Education Team Training Project and to become the first statewide Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for Ohio.



In 1996, the Ohio Coalition Governing Board voted to change the name of the organization from the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Handicapped Children to the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD), in order to use "people first" language. A well-known advocate for students with disabilities and their families, Margaret Burley was the driving force behind several education reforms in Ohio. This work, by promoting the voice of parents and consumers, facilitated many changes in public policy and in Ohio law. A few of these include:

1. 1976, the passage of H.B. 455, Ohio's version of P.L. 94-142, was passed;

2. 1989, supported the change of the Ohio Developmental Disability definition to match the federal definition and supported the change to mandatory preschool special education, adding funding for it in the state budget;

3. 2001, supported the change for special education funding to a 6-weight per pupil formula by leading the creation of a cost-based methodology for funding special education services in Ohio's schools, recognized as a leading best practice model; and

4. 2002, led the effort to change state standards to meet federal IDEA requirements.



Under the guidance of Margaret Burley and Lee Ann Derugen, the Ohio Coalition grew from one part-time director (paid with dues from the three professional organizations) in 1979 to a fully functioning agency with more than 25 staff members and a \$2.5 million budget, advocating for and supporting the provision of appropriate educational services for children with disabilities, and parent and family support services.

Throughout the years, the Ohio Coalition has focused on giving a voice to the parents and families of children dealing with the challenges of disability, and it has worked to promote support for the professionals who work with them. Margaret Burley retired in 2018 and serves as the Executive Director Emeritus.

November 12, 2018 – Ohio Educational Service Center Association Recognized Margaret Burley with their Lifetime Achievement Award.

*"Margaret Burley has dedicated her life to supporting the most vulnerable children in our state. She has never quit helping children meet life's challenges and succeed in everyday life. The OESCA awards program symbolizes the very heart and essence of Ohio's 52 Educational Service Centers, pooling exemplary leaders, community resources, businesses, private industry, and government together to better serve Ohio school districts and Ohio's youth regardless of*



*where they live and attend school. It is only fitting that OESCA recognize Margaret with the OESCA Lifetime Achievement Award, the association's highest honor, for her decades of service to others.*

*Craig Burford, Executive Director*

*OESCA"*

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OCECD has been an experienced provider of technical assistance and parent and professional training for the families of children with disabilities, from birth to age 26, for the state of Ohio continuously since 1983, as well as for the United States Department of Education continuously since 1984. Currently, OCECD continues its work as Ohio's PTI, and we are proud to have held this federal grant for 38 years. Through the PTI grant, as well as the other projects it holds, OCECD can successfully continue to carry out our mission of supporting parents, students, children, and professionals. OCECD additionally receives IDEA funds through the Ohio Department of Education to further support our work. Another exciting endeavor we have is the Infant Hearing Family Outreach Program, through the Ohio Department of Health, which also assists us in providing services for all children and youth with disabilities in Ohio.

Other funded projects this year include, but are not limited to, grants from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, the Ohio Department of Education's Office for Early Learning and School Readiness, WI-Facets, Project Launch, and NAMI of Franklin County.

We are honored and grateful to be able to continue our focus of providing services for all children and youth with disabilities in Ohio in affirmation of the dignity of each child or youth with disabilities, whose needs must be met equally and appropriately.

Today, the Ohio Coalition, under the leadership of Executive Director, Dr. Lisa Hickman, and Assistant Director, Marbella Cáceres, functions with 24 staff in 16 offices across Ohio serving families of all children with any disability, ages birth through 26. OCECD's experienced staff, many of whom have children or other family members with disabilities, are available to assist individuals or groups, free of charge.

As a state-level organization, OCECD is an important policy development organization deeply committed to working with the state legislature, the Office of the Governor, and state agencies on legislative and policy issues of importance to Ohio's children with disabilities.

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**The Horn/Walter /Burley Awards** are presented in honor of two outstanding Ohio educators, the late Raymond A. Horn and the late Franklin B. Walter, who supported and encouraged teachers and their students with disabilities throughout their long careers as educational leaders in Ohio. In 2018, Margaret Burley's name was added to the awards, to honor her outstanding work as Director of OCECD. For the past several years, OCECD has collaborated with partner organizations, Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACBDD), and Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA).



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### **OCALI's Margaret Burley Family Impact Award**

Named in honor of Margaret Burley, former Executive Director of the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities for 39 years, the Margaret Burley Family Impact Award recognizes a professional or parent who has made a significant impact on the lives of families of those with disabilities. As a parent herself of a son with disabilities, Margaret advocated for her son's right and ability to learn, grow, and be a contributing member of their community. The nominees of the Family Impact Award have served as mentors, coaches, advocates, and/or connectors for families and have demonstrated ongoing and continuous passion, dedication, and support for families







# Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

## OCECD Governing Board - Present and Past

What makes OCECD so very unique is its operation as a true Coalition - our Governing Board is comprised of organizations, agencies, and individuals coming together with a common goal. Today, OCECD's staff are supported by over 35 parent and professional organizations who are members of the governing board. Over the years, the Coalition has been very fortunate to have had the support and leadership of some of Ohio's most dedicated parents and professionals. Our current board President is William Bagnola, and our Vice-President is Dee Marks, 2022-2023.

Some of our Past Presidents include:

- Jack Brownley 2020-2021
- Cathy Ruiz 2018-2019 and 2014-2015
- Christine France 2016-2017
- Dale DeGirolamo 2012-2013
- Diane Graves 2010-2011
- Pat Cloppert 2008-2009
- Sam Geldis 2006-2007
- Frances Bauer Morrow 2004-2005
- Jerry Argabrite 2000-2002
- Jan Osborn 1996-1998
- Dale DeGirolamo 1994-1995
- Lou Mazzoli 1980's
- Mike Kabler 1976-1978

Dale DeGirolamo also served as Treasurer from 2003-2009. Jack Dauterman was the first volunteer Treasurer from 1979-1983.

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## Today's Coalition Team

OCECD has been fortunate to collaborate with dedicated volunteers, board members, numerous professional organizations, federal, state, local agencies, and staff who are committed to our mission of serving children with disabilities and their families. We are grateful to everyone who has been a part of OCECD over the years, including those who are involved today, those who have retired, and those we have lost.

Across our beautiful state of Ohio, our staff has grown to become a vibrant community of 24 dedicated people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including an administrative team which daily supports the challenging work we do in serving vulnerable populations. Our staff are passionate, steadfast, and continue to be as committed to OCECD's mission as those who began this work fifty years ago. We wish to thank every staff member and their families for making OCECD a great organization that works diligently with our partners in fulfilling our mission. Our current [OCECD staff are:](#)

- Dr. Lisa Hickman, Executive Director
- Marbella Cáceres, Assistant Director & Statewide Multicultural Director
- Laryssa Beatty, Information Specialist/Trainer, East Central Office
- Chantelle Blackburn, Executive Assistant
- Sandy Brickner, Statewide Preschool Program Coordinator
- Robin Bryant, Information Specialist/Trainer, Southwest Office
- Kelly Buerger, Grants/Fiscal Manager/Bookkeeper
- Nancy Crabtree, Information Specialist/Trainer, Southern Office
- Kim Dennison, Information Specialist/Trainer, Ohio River Valley Office
- Angie Ferdinand, Executive Assistant
- Amy Freeman, Statewide Transition Programs Coordinator
- Elaine Hamilton, Information Specialist/Trainer, Central Ohio Office
- Erin Hinkel, Information Specialist/Trainer, West Central Office
- Connie Hudson, Conference Coordinator
- Martha Lausé, Information Specialist/Trainer, Mid-Central Ohio
- Megan Lucas, Parent Training Assistant
- Lisa Lutz, Information Specialist/Trainer, Northeast Office

- Iliana Martinez, Multicultural Information Specialist/Trainer, Mid-Ohio Latino Office
  - Najma Mohamoud, Multicultural Information Specialist/Trainer, Somali and African Communities
  - Brandi Muhammad, Information Specialist/Trainer, Northwest Ohio
  - Nick Pirnstill, Information Technology/Webmaster
  - Elizabeth Rivero, Multicultural Information Specialist/Trainer, Southwest Latino Oce
  - Tammie Sebastian, Statewide Program Coordinator/Social Media Coordinator, Cleveland Oce
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## Looking Toward The Future

OCECD has been a support to many families and individuals over the last 50 years. We began as a small group of parents and professionals concerned about the equal access to education for our children in Ohio. Today we are as committed to serving families of children with disabilities, students with disabilities, and professionals as we were when the Coalition first began.

*“We the people of Ohio join together as the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) to endorse and promote efforts to provide appropriate quality education for children and youth with disabilities. We do so in the belief that all children have a right to a meaningful and relevant education. This belief affirms the dignity of each child or youth with disabilities, whose needs are unique and whose needs must be met equally and appropriately. We, therefore, pledge our full and combined support to this Coalition dedicated to insuring meaningful and relevant education for all children and youth with disabilities in Ohio.”*

As we progress into the future, we affirm our commitment, dedication, and support for successful outcomes for students with disabilities in Ohio. As an effective Coalition of professionals, parents, and individuals, with the OCECD staff, we will go into the future with a common goal of making a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

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OCECD has partnered alongside the Office for Exceptional Children since 1998 with each of our State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) projects. You've worked with us side by side to build and support the design and implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process. More specifically you were involved in helping district teams understand how to include parents and caregivers into the continuous improvement process at district and building levels. You provided training for teams on the inclusion of families and helped educators better connect to families while planning how to improve outcomes for students. Our last SPDG grant you were right alongside us developing and supporting families with literacy!



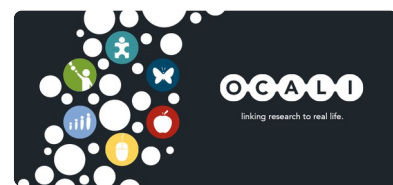
OCECD has also been by our side as we embark on convening stakeholders across the state each time we go through an Ohio Revised Code Rule Review Process. Stakeholder voice and engagement is critical to ensuring we are getting the aim of the work right! And there you were right alongside each step of that process!

So, congratulations! Welcome to 50! I am looking forward to what we can build and support together in the next 50 years for Ohio families and children! As these are the most valuable assets we have as a state, the people!

Happy Birthday OCECD! Honored to work alongside with you!

Best, Jo Hannah Ward  
Director, Office for Exceptional Children"

"Happy Birthday OCECD! Wow! 50 years! This is an amazing milestone. Take time to celebrate the birthday, the milestone, and the impact you have made for students and families across Ohio and beyond. The Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, has been a long-time partner with OCECD. It's time to reflect and think back about our lives, the struggles, the friendships, the families, the children who have benefited from this relationship.



One project that we have partnered together on for many years is the design, development, and growth of the Parent Mentor Project across Ohio! The idea of the parent mentor was born in 1991! The design was simple, parents supporting each other through a cumbersome and scary process. The project started with 10 projects, funded with federal funds through the Office for Exceptional Children. Due to the ability to demonstrate impact for families and children, together we were able to leverage additional funds through the state legislature and have funding established in the state budget. This is an amazing outcome of the partnership. The state budget now supports about 75 parent mentor projects. This accounts for about 100 parents' mentors across the state supporting thousands of families and children through the rather cumbersome special education process. WOW, what a legacy to celebrate on your birthday!

*"It is with great pleasure that OCALI extends its congratulations to the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) on its 50th Anniversary year. Since its establishment, OCECD has been a model of exemplary service working to advance supports for individuals with disabilities and their families. Grounded in its make-up as a parent-professional organization, OCECD has always emphasized the important role of families in creating services to address the needs of their loved ones. The scope of their work has encompassed building the educational, vocational, residential, and community-based services necessary to allow people with disabilities to achieve their full potential and participate fully in their communities.*

*In its work, OCECD has advocated at local, state, and the national levels often working in collaboration with others to strengthen their impact. Since 1984, OCECD has functioned as Ohio's statewide parent training and information center, a role that they expanded through partnership with the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children. Through its parent/educator training model, OCECD provided parents and families statewide with information that allowed them to actively participate in planning for their children's educational needs at the school district level. In addition to its work in K-12 education, OCECD has promoted best practices in early intervention, transitional services, and self-advocacy training. With its establishment and leadership for the Parent Mentor Project, OCECD worked to further expand Ohio's network of parent and family supports throughout Ohio. In so doing, the organization has facilitated significant change in the implementation of IDEA across the state.*

*OCECD has always had an emphasis on collaboration and partnership. It has worked with parent and professional organizations, state agencies, and legislators to carry out its work. OCECD was an early supporter for the establishment of OCALI with its focus on partnership, policy, and practice to promote change to expand opportunities for people with disabilities. Since our inception, we have enjoyed working in partnership with OCECD to improve the daily lives of people with disabilities and the families that support them.*

*The work of OCECD over its 50 years of service has served to make Ohio a national leader in education and in adult and family support services. We value OCECD's outstanding work, and we look forward to opportunities to partner on future initiatives to create successful outcomes for people with disabilities in ways that will change the very face of the communities we all live in.*

*Shawn Henry, Executive Director, OCALI*

*Donna Owens, Consultant, OCALI "*

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*"Congratulations to OCECD for fifty years of service to families and students in Ohio! On behalf of Disability Rights Ohio, I am grateful to have collaborated with OCECD on many efforts to improve services to Ohio's families. From working together on systems change efforts to ensuring that underserved families have language access to the special education process, to brainstorming about the best way to help an individual child and family, OCECD has always been an active and engaged partner, and a partner I can trust will provide meaningful and accurate information to the families we both serve. DRO is excited to work with OCECD for the next fifty years as we move toward full access for all families in the special education process. The need for family support in the special education system is great*



*and DRO can better help to meet the need with trusted partners like OCECD. Thank you for all you do for Ohio's families!*

*Kristin Hildebrant, Senior Attorney/Education Team Leader  
Disability Rights Ohio"*

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On a scale of 1-4, rate the relevance of this OCECD newsletter for your own child/students'/consumers' experiences.

★ 1      ★ 2      ★ 3      ★ 4

Not Relevant      Very Relevant

**NEXT →**



**OCECD**

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities



125 Executive Dr. Suite 200  
Marion, Oh 43302  
844.382.5452  
[ocecd@ocecd.org](mailto:ocecd@ocecd.org)