

On Sept. 8, the board voted to consolidate Jackson Adult Center with Beckman, Franks and Kidd Adult Centers. This transition will be complete by March 1, 2016. Since the decision was announced, we've received many questions from individuals, families and staff about the consolidation and future of DD services in Hamilton County.

In these times of change and uncertainty, we want to be honest and open with as much detail as we know. Below you'll find answers to the questions we've received so far.

If you have other questions for us or have comments about this consolidation, call (513) 559-6701 or email consolidationquestions@hamiltondds.org.

Consolidating Jackson Adult Center

1. **Why was Jackson picked?** A number of factors went into the decision to close Jackson, including the proximity to Kidd Adult Center, which is about 10 miles away. Jackson had the lowest number of people served and many staff who participated in the early retirement program. Rather than hiring new people, it was possible to consolidate individuals and staff into the three other adult centers or other day service providers while limiting disruption to services. Closing the building will also save money in the agency's operational budget, which means we can help more people in the community.
2. **If individuals make a choice before March 1, can they stay at Jackson until then or will they have to move immediately?** The plan is for individuals and staff to move prior to March 1. We need to make sure there is enough staff support for the people at each building during the transition. This process will be done in phases based on several factors. Individual planning meetings with Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) and other people the person chooses will be complete by December.
3. **Will transportation still be provided to the other adult centers or another agency provider?** Yes, and your SSA can help make the specific arrangements.
4. **How long will the bus ride be to the new center?** Each trip can be no longer than 90 minutes by law, though times can vary based on where a person lives in relation to the new center/program. Our goal is to keep bus rides to the absolute minimum and not reach the 90 minutes allowable.
5. **Is there a limit on how many people from Jackson can attend the other centers?** We have a spot at Beckman, Franks and Kidd for every person who attends Jackson, should they choose that option. We need to keep the number of people going to each building as even as possible because we need enough staff at each building to support the people who go there. Also, several people who attend Jackson go somewhere else at least part of the week, and we expect some people to leave the adult centers for another provider.
6. **How will individuals from Jackson get acquainted to the new building?** Each person from Jackson will have the chance to tour their new adult center before attending. Teams from Jackson and the other buildings will meet to discuss needs and supports to make sure it's a successful transition for everyone.
7. **What happens to the staff at Jackson?** We are not laying off anyone. All staff will be transitioned to new buildings or new roles as people served move to other buildings or programs.

8. **What if my loved one has a hard time adjusting, resists the change and it doesn't work out?** We don't anticipate that happening for many people, but if it does, your SSA will help find a more suitable program.
9. **What happens to the Jackson building?** We're not sure what will happen to the Jackson building. In the past, businesses have expressed interest in buying it, but we do not know more at this point.
10. **Why weren't people consulted about options before the decision?** We've been sharing information for years about the issues affecting Ohio's DD System, including the new Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) rule and enforcement of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead decision regarding segregated services. Our recent strategic planning and annual plan process also included discussions about the issues we are facing, and those plans were developed based on input from families, individuals, providers and staff. We also had "State of the Agency" forums across the county in early 2015 for people to learn more and share concerns with us. The 2014-2019 Strategic Plan, annual plans and documents from the community forums are available on our website, www.hamiltondds.org.

At the end of June, we learned about the 2024 deadline to stop providing direct waiver services, and our board discussed options in July and August. Additionally, the agency was required to send a CMS rule compliance plan to the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities in September and has to provide updates every six months. Closing Jackson is the first step in a long process, though we do not yet know what that process will involve. Our next step is convening a stakeholder group of families, people served, providers, and staff to provide input about how best to proceed. Their report and feedback will be used as we put together the 2016 annual plan.

Choosing another day program or service provider

1. **If my loved one chooses to go to a provider, how do I make sure they're in a safe environment like they are at the adult centers?** Providers in Hamilton County are certified by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities just like staff at HCDDS and are subject to regularly scheduled reviews. Also, providers are required to follow the same standards and rules regarding safety and support as we are at the adult centers. Our agency's quality assurance team oversees the providers in Hamilton County to make sure they're doing a good job for the people we serve. In addition, our agency's Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) actively monitor services and supports provided.
2. **How do we make the best choice if we choose to move to a provider?** We will hold provider fairs to give individuals and families a chance to speak with the various providers in Hamilton County. Our agency is also creating a provider catalog with information to help with this choice. We encourage you to personally arrange visits with several providers and ask questions, as well as talk to other families with loved ones who attend those programs.
3. **Will the providers be affected by the same rules as Hamilton County DD Services?** Providers are not subject to the CMS rule regarding conflict-free case management. However, they are under jurisdiction of the Olmstead Decision requiring services to be provided in a non-segregated setting. This means people with disabilities can work alongside people without disabilities or participate in other community programs. Our providers in Hamilton County are aware of these rules and in the process of determining what community integration looks like for each individual.

4. **Will our Medicaid waiver be affected if we choose to split time between one of the other adult centers and community provider?** Money for services is based on need and not how frequently you attend a program. Waiver funds should not be affected by this decision. Talk to your SSA about specific concerns.

The future of DD services and other questions

1. **Will you eventually close the other adult centers?** We cannot say for sure at this point what will happen. We have to be out of the business of adult centers by 2024 because of the CMS conflict-free rule, which says county boards cannot write plans for individuals and also provide direct waiver services. We're gathering people together this fall to talk about how to plan services and transition to this new model while still following federal rules for how we operate.
2. **Won't closing your adult centers leave my loved one without services?** The individuals who attend our adult centers will still receive services, it is just unclear at this point exactly what that will look like. We have more than 70 other agencies in Hamilton County with day programs, as well as many independent providers. One HCDDS team is focused on building up the provider network so individuals will have even more options in the community, particularly those with intense medical or behavioral needs.
3. **Could the other adult centers be operated by a private provider?** Privatization is one possible option, but nothing has been decided. We have a group of people who will meet this fall to help plan the future of DD services in Hamilton County. This stakeholder group includes families, advocates, people served, providers, staff and other community partners. Their work should be complete by the end of 2015.
4. **What happens to the agency-operated schools?** Schools are not impacted by the CMS conflict-free rule, and there are no plans to close Fairfax or Rost at this time
5. **Do these changes mean everyone will have to get a job?** Under Ohio's Employment First, all people with disabilities must be on a path to employment, which ranges from having a community job to learning more about work options and deciding whether employment is the right choice. We want to engage in these discussions with the people we serve and their families. The goal is to get people with disabilities more involved in their community, whether that's through a job, volunteer work or other projects.
6. **How do these rules affect people living in group homes and the services they receive?** The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), which is enforcing the Olmstead Decision, is looking at larger residential group homes and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICFs), where people with disabilities live together. The DOJ, along with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, are offering incentives for these facilities to downsize the number of people and shift to smaller settings in the community. Small licensed group homes, where services are funded by HCB waivers, are not impacted by these rules. Hamilton County DD Services does not operate residential programs.

We have more information about the consolidation, providers and the factors that led to this decision on our website, www.hamiltondds.org.