



MetroHealth
Devoted to Hope, Health, and Humanity

Contact: Elizabeth Day, Director, Public Information and Communication, Cuyahoga DD
216-736-2691
Day.Elizabeth@CuyahogaBDD.org

Dorsena Koonce, Media and Communications Manager, The MetroHealth System
216-598-9908
dkoonce@metrohealth.org

Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities and The MetroHealth System Partner on Dental Sedation Clinic

Clinic aims to reduce wait time for dental procedures among people with developmental disabilities by providing access to sedation that does not require the use of an operating room.

For immediate release December 7, 2023:

Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Cuyahoga DD) and The MetroHealth System have launched a critically needed dental sedation clinic serving people with developmental disabilities (DD). Such individuals often require general anesthesia within an operating room (OR) due to medical complications and/or difficulty coping with the procedure while awake. This can result in people not receiving timely dental care due to lack of available time in the OR. Delaying or not receiving dental care can contribute to additional medical risk, discomfort, behavioral reactions, and distress in families who find themselves unable to secure necessary care for their loved one.

The need for timely dental care for people with DD is urgent in Cuyahoga County. “We have observed over time – anecdotally and through an assessment done in conjunction with the Center for Community Solutions – that there is a significant unmet need in our community when it comes to dental care for people with developmental disabilities,” said Richard Cirillo, Ph.D., Chief Clinical Officer for Cuyahoga DD.



1275 Lakeside Avenue • Cleveland, OH 44114-1129 • (216) 241-8230 • Fax (216) 861-0253

Lisa M. Hunt, *President* • Cynthia V. Schulz, *Vice President* • Mozelle T. Jackson, *Secretary*
Allison R. Frazier • Steven M. Licciardi • Alaina N. McCruel • Stephen M. Scheidt

When surveyed, only eight of 107 local dental providers responded; and of those, only two indicated a capacity for providing the type of anesthesia most often needed for people with a developmental disability. When patient families were surveyed, only about one-third stated that they could get appointments in a timely fashion. The demand for these services far exceeds the current capacity to deliver them. Right now, people with disabilities who are relying on general anesthesia for dental procedures are waiting between one and two years for an appointment. The sedation clinic will serve individuals with forms of sedation that do not require an operating room when possible and appropriate, freeing up the operating room for those for whom general anesthesia is the only real option.

The MetroHealth Dental Sedation clinic is located at 3701 Lorain Avenue in Ohio City and when it is fully operational 12 to 18 months from now, will see 30-40 patients per week. Cuyahoga DD contributed \$25,000 to the sedation clinic's development and has committed one full-time employee to support people with disabilities in scheduling appointments, coordinating other medical procedures that need to be done while the patient is under anesthesia, and helping patients navigate billing and Medicaid systems.

In-office sedation clinics are very rare in Northeast Ohio," said Dr. Gregory Heintschel, MetroHealth's Chair of Dental Medicine. "This is a new access point. By using the in-office clinic for high-functioning patients, we are able to open up more spots in the operating room allowing for greater access overall."

"We are grateful for MetroHealth's partnership," said Cuyahoga DD Superintendent and CEO Dr. Amber Gibbs. "This clinic will be a game changer for people we support, and we hope it can be a model for other clinics across the county.

*The Cuyahoga County Board of DD proudly serves 10,000 children and adults throughout the county.
It is supported primarily by a local property tax last approved by voters in 2005.*

About The MetroHealth System

Founded in 1837, MetroHealth is leading the way to a healthier you and a healthier community through service, teaching, discovery, and teamwork. Cuyahoga County's public, safety-net hospital system, MetroHealth meets people where they are, providing care through four hospitals, four emergency departments, and more than 20 health centers and 40 additional sites. Each day, our 8,000 employees focus on providing our community with equitable health care—through patient-focused research, access to care, and support services—that seeks to eradicate health disparities rooted in systematic barriers. For more information, visit metrohealth.org.