

## BFAIR Networking Tips for First-Time Attendees

Welcome, and thank you for representing BFAIR at a professional networking event! Whether you're attending a conference, chamber mixer, or community gathering, your presence helps raise awareness about our mission and builds valuable connections. Here are some helpful tips to guide your experience:

### 1. Know Your Why

Before you attend, take a moment to reflect on:

- **What BFAIR does** – We provide support, advocacy, and resources for individuals with disabilities and their families.
- **Why you're attending** – To connect with others, share BFAIR's mission, learn about other organizations, and potentially open the door for partnerships or support.

Have a 1–2 sentence summary ready, like:

“BFAIR is a human service agency providing support to people with developmental disabilities, autism, and acquired brain injuries throughout Berkshire County and beyond.”

### 2. Dress the Part

Wear professional or business casual attire that reflects the values of BFAIR—respectful, polished, and approachable. Consider wearing a BFAIR name badge or branded gear if available.

### 3. Bring Essentials

- Business cards (your own or general BFAIR cards)
- Brochures or informational materials (if applicable)
- A notepad or phone to jot down names and ideas
- A positive attitude and a smile!

### 4. Start with a Friendly Introduction

Networking can feel awkward at first. Start simply:

- “Hi, I’m [Your Name] with BFAIR—nice to meet you.”
- Ask open-ended questions like “What brings you to this event?” or “Tell me about your organization.”

### 5. Share, but Don’t Oversell

Be ready to talk about:

- The services BFAIR offers
- Why you care about the work we do
- Ways others might connect with or support BFAIR

Avoid coming across too “salesy.” Focus on building relationships and finding common ground.

## 6. Listen More Than You Speak

Great networking isn't just about talking—it's about learning. Show genuine interest in others' work and look for natural points of connection. People appreciate being heard.

## 7. Look for Collaborative Opportunities

Some people you meet might:

- Work with similar populations
- Be interested in volunteering or donating
- Offer resources BFAIR could benefit from

Ask questions like:

“Have you ever partnered with human service agencies before?”

## 8. Wrap Up Gracefully

If a conversation is winding down, say:

“It was great meeting you—I'd love to stay in touch.”

Then offer your card or suggest connecting on LinkedIn.

## 9. Follow Up

After the event:

- Send a short email or message to new contacts.
- Share BFAIR's website or social media.
- Let the BFAIR team know about potential connections. Connections can go to Katrina Cardillo, Senior Director of Marketing & PR, [kcardillo@bfair.org](mailto:kcardillo@bfair.org)

## 10. Be Yourself

You don't need to be an expert networker—just be authentic. Your enthusiasm for BFAIR's mission is the most compelling part of your introduction.

**Thank you for being a BFAIR ambassador. Your voice helps expand our impact in the community!**

### Talking Points

- **Founded in 1994** with a mission to serve individuals with disabilities.
- **First residential home** for people with developmental disabilities opened the same year.
- **1996:** Launched our first **Day Habilitation program** for adults with disabilities who attend program during the day with a more medical model including speech, OT, PT, and clinical supports.
- **2000:** Secured our first **vocational contract**, laying the foundation for today's **Employment Services program** (training, job placement, student support).
- Operates a **bottle and can redemption center** in North Adams for employment and vocational training.
- **2009:** Moved administrative office and Day Habilitation program to South Church Street, North Adams.
- Opened a **satellite office in Pittsfield** to expand community living and family outreach services.
- **2014:** Opened a home for four women with **acquired brain injuries (ABI)**.
  - Expanded to **five additional ABI homes**, including three in the **Pioneer Valley**.
- Operates **14 residential homes** for adults with intellectual disabilities, autism, and ABI.
- Offers **Adult Family Care and Shared Living** for individuals supported in family or caregiver homes which includes dedicated nursing staff.
- **2015:** Opened a second day program called **Community-Based Day Services (CBDS) center** in North Berkshire. This is a more community integration and volunteer program to gain life skills and become an active member in their community.
- **2016:** Relocated **Family and Individual Supports program** to Pittsfield to better support independent and family-based living. This program includes support to create meaningful peer and social relationships.
  - Strong focus on **advocacy and empowerment**, ensuring equitable access to:
  - Health and dental care
  - Emotional and behavioral support
  - Community integration
  - Promote independence
- **Clinical Department** provides:
  - Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)–based support
  - Behavioral plans, medication monitoring
  - Collaboration with psychiatrists, neurologists, and regional facilities
  - Staff training and individual therapeutic planning
- **Serving nearly 600 individuals** with a team of **300+ dedicated staff**.
  - Proudly affiliated with **Northern Berkshire United Way** and **Williamstown Community Chest**.

- Committed to **fostering inclusion and building brighter futures** for people with disabilities.