

Advocacy Report

January 2020 - June 2020

All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

BENEFITS – IHSS

OCRA Makes a \$10,800 Phone Call.

During the COVID-19 public health crisis, OCRA staff called past clients to check in to see how they were doing. OCRA spoke with an adult client, Juan, and his mother, Rosa, who live together. Juan and Rosa reported they were having a hard time being home all the time. Rosa, who is Juan's IHSS provider, mentioned that Juan's authorized IHSS hours were not covering the increased need for care during this time. OCRA agreed to call IHSS with Juan and Rosa on the phone. Upon reviewing the case, the IHSS social worker explained they could add nine extra hours per month to account for these new circumstances. In reviewing the case, the IHSS social worker realized that the county had made a significant error – Juan was only receiving a third of the hours to which he was entitled. The county explained it would make this right by retroactively paying for those missed hours over the past ten months. Rosa completed new timesheets and within the month, the family received a check for \$10,800. Rosa and Juan were very thankful for the OCRA call.

Kobe Is Awarded 156 Additional IHSS Hours and \$15,000 in Retroactive Pay.

Kobe needs a lot of support to remain safely in his own home. The county IHSS office reevaluated and reduced Kobe's IHSS hours. Kobe filed an appeal, but received a phone call from State Hearings Division (SHD) that the hearing was canceled because Kobe reached an agreement with the county appeals specialist. Kobe then received a letter from SHD stating his appeal was dismissed because he did not attend his hearing. OCRA helped Kobe's family understand his IHSS appeal rights. OCRA requested records, prepared the evidence for hearing, and was ready to represent Kobe at the hearing. Before the hearing, OCRA negotiated a resolution to the case. OCRA advocacy resulted in Kobe being awarded 156 additional IHSS hours per month and \$15,000 in retroactive pay.

Isabel Uses Tips from an OCRA Zoom Training to Get More IHSS Hours.

Social distancing has been a key safety measure to reduce the spread of COVID-19. To adjust to new regulations and continue educating consumers, OCRA has changed outreach and trainings to Zoom video trainings. Isabel's mother attended OCRA's Zoom training about the updates made to IHSS rules, regulations, and policies during COVID-19. Isabel's mother used what she learned in the training to request additional hours after Isabel's school switched to remote learning. Isabel and her mother succeeded in advocating for additional hours.

Marlene Found Eligible for Protective Supervision Hours.

Marlene was awarded a few IHSS hours, but her elderly parent strongly believed she required protective supervision to remain living safely at home. OCRA investigated Marlene's case and agreed the documentation showed her need for protective supervision. OCRA then advocated for additional hours, including protective supervision, and provided ongoing support to Marlene's family to properly submit needed forms to the county. As a result, Marlene's IHSS hours were increased to 275 hours a month, dating back to the initial application date. Marlene received a retroactive payment of \$10,000.

BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL

OCRA Saves Family \$1,129 Per Month in Share of Cost Fees.

Brittany's mother called OCRA after receiving a notice of action from Medi-Cal. The notice told Brittany she now has a Medi-Cal monthly share of cost of \$1,129. OCRA represented Brittany in the past, when she was made eligible for the Medi-Cal Pickle program, which gave her Medi-Cal benefits with no share of cost because of the type of Social Security benefits she receives. After reviewing new information and obtaining supporting documentation, OCRA helped Brittany advocate for no share-of-cost Medi-Cal. OCRA contacted the county on Brittany's behalf to provide documents showing that she met the criteria for the Pickle Medi-Cal program without a share of cost. The county agreed it made a mistake and Brittany was entitled to Medi-Cal with no share of cost.

BENEFITS – SSDI

OCRA Helps Carl to Reinstate His Social Security Benefits.

Carl contacted OCRA because he received a notice from Social Security that his Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits were terminated and he had an overpayment. OCRA met with Carl and his circle of support to discuss the termination of his benefits and reviewed several notices. OCRA also contacted Carl's employer to ask about his supports on the job provided as a subsidy by the employer. The employer completed paperwork that Carl has about 50% productivity as compared to a non-disabled employee, but is paid the same amount. OCRA provided this information as part of an appeal to Social Security. Social Security determined Carl does have a 50% subsidy, which means only half his income counts. Social Security reinstated Carl's SSDI benefits, retroactively, which also cleared his overpayment.

BENEFITS – SSI

OCRA Representation Results in Waiver of \$4500 SSI Overpayment and Monthly Benefit Increase.

Ana is a young adult who lives with her two parents and siblings. Ana's mother called OCRA after receiving notice from Social Security that she had a \$4500 SSI overpayment from when she was a child. OCRA reviewed Ana's notice and discovered Social Security used an incorrect resource limit calculation to determine she was overpaid. Social Security was using the individual resource limit of \$2000, when they should have been using the family resource limit of \$5000, because Ana was a child living with two parents. OCRA filed an appeal, represented her at a meeting, and explained to Social Security they used the incorrect resource limit. Social Security said the mother did not have a Social Security number when Ana first became eligible for SSI, so their system automatically defaulted to the individual resource limit. When a parent does not have a Social Security number, they should make sure Social Security is applying the correct resource limit. In Ana's case, Social Security agreed the overpayment was incorrect. Social Security waived the entire \$4500 SSI overpayment because they had not used the two-parent household resource limit. At the informal conference, OCRA also asked Social Security to look at Ana's household size and the rent she was paying. Social Security was applying in-kind support and maintenance

rules that reduced Ana's SSI benefit amount by one-third. Since Ana's family is large and they live in a small apartment, Social Security determined she was paying her fair share of rent and food. Ana's SSI benefit amount was increased to the full amount.

Oscar Receives Over \$2,000 and is Approved to Manage His Own Benefits.

Oscar contacted OCRA because he had not received his usual SSI and SSDI monthly payments for three months. His aunt, who is his representative payee, had a heart attack and three strokes and felt she could no longer serve as payee. Oscar also said he did not want to have a payee and instead wanted to manage his own benefits. After OCRA spoke with three representatives over three phone calls, Social Security agreed to restore Oscar's SSI and SSDI benefit and send a retroactive payment of over \$2,000 for the missing three months. Social Security also scheduled a phone interview to evaluate Oscar to be his own representative payee. Oscar can now manage his own benefits and is receiving his benefits into his own bank account.

Sara Obtains Favorable Decision on an SSI Overpayment.

Sara, a minor, received a notice of overpayment that her mother appealed three days after she received it. According to the notice, Sara and her mother were over their resource limit of \$2,000 each for two months, so Sara was not eligible for an SSI benefit for those two months. In her appeal, Sara's mother requested an in-person reconsideration meeting to resolve the issue and continued benefits during the appeal process. Social Security sent a letter stating that their original decision was correct - that Sara was overpaid. The letter said if she disagreed, she could request a hearing with a judge. Social Security also withheld a portion of Sara's monthly SSI benefit to recover the overpayment. OCRA reviewed their bank statements for resource amounts. OCRA noticed that Sara had exempt Social Security underpayment funds in her account, and that her mother had exempt income tax refunds in her account during the time they said Sara was overpaid. OCRA requested that Social Security reinstate Sara's benefit, return benefits withheld for the overpayment, rescind its letter telling her to appeal to a judge, and provide the requested meeting. Social Security did so. OCRA represented Sara at the meeting and provided evidence that an overpayment did not occur because Sara and her mother had exempt funds in their accounts, and when the exempt

funds were deducted from their accounts, they were not over the resource limit. Following the meeting, Social Security sent Sara a letter advising her she had no overpayment.

David's SSI Benefit is Increased and He Receives a Lump Sum Retroactive Payment.

David's work hours were reduced from 20 per week to less than 10 per week, due to budget cuts. David always gave his paystubs to Social Security regularly, but did not have receipts to prove it. David received conflicting notices from Social Security, just weeks apart. One notice said his SSI benefit would be increased and another said his benefit would be reduced. David and his mother reported his income change to Social Security by submitting 12 months of pay stubs to a local field office several times, but did not receive an adjustment to his SSI benefit for nearly 10 months. His appeal timelines had passed. With David's permission, OCRA contacted a supervisor at the local Social Security field office to resolve the issue without filing a late appeal. The SSI supervisor researched David's case and located the 12 months of paystubs that David submitted. The supervisor made the corrections to David's file and followed up with OCRA once his benefit amount was adjusted. The supervisor also recommended that David (or his representative payee) utilize the online paystub reporting system to avoid similar errors in the future. David's mother later confirmed David received a lump sum retroactive payment of over \$2,000. Social Security also sent David receipts for each paystub, an accounting, and a notice saying that David would receive the correct, increased monthly benefit amount.

HOUSING

Homeless Client Receives Emergency Transitional Housing During COVID-19 Pandemic.

Athena was homeless and desperately needed a place to live. Local non-profits have been helping people with emergency housing options during the COVID-19 crisis. Athena was having trouble understanding the transitional housing process and connecting with the non-profit agency organizing transitional housing in her county. With Athena's permission, OCRA contacted the agency to explain she is a client of the regional center and needs additional support to navigate the transitional housing process. The non-profit was thankful for the information about Athena's need for

support, since they had not understood why she was calling so frequently and why it was hard for her to understand information they provided. The agency provided extra help to Athena to finalize the application process for emergency transitional housing. Within a week, Athena obtained emergency housing at a hotel. Having a place to live increases Athena's chances of remaining healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keisha Gets an Apartment.

Keisha and her mother had been homeless for nearly two years, and had been on a waiting list for an affordable apartment complex for over five years. Keisha is a 40-year-old woman with cerebral palsy and an intellectual disability. Keisha and her mother were notified they had been accepted for their new apartment, but Keisha's mother would need to have a conservatorship over Keisha for them to move in. The attorney for the apartment complex's owners believed that Keisha was not legally capable of signing a lease. The regional center referred Keisha to OCRA for legal representation. OCRA contacted the property managers and explained that as a non-conserved adult, Keisha was presumptively competent to sign her own lease. OCRA continued advocating for Keisha by contacting the complex owners' attorney. OCRA arranged a meeting with the attorney, explained Keisha's legal rights, and negotiated a compromise that would allow for her to move in, with OCRA helping to explain her lease in a simple manner. OCRA attended Keisha's lease signing and explained her lease terms. OCRA also completed an apartment walk-through with Keisha, and watched as she received her apartment keys. Keisha and her family thanked OCRA for ensuring they have a safe and affordable place to call home for the first time in years.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

OCRA Creates a Spanish CalFresh and Pandemic-EBT Training.

OCRA presented to a crowd of 50 Spanish-speaking parents of regional center clients, using Zoom video-conferencing, on CalFresh Benefits. After presenting, OCRA took questions from parents for a full hour. OCRA created this training because the CalFresh program increased its food benefit grant amount because of the COVID-19 pandemic. CalFresh also created a new public benefit program for children in public schools, called Pandemic-EBT. OCRA explained both programs in detail, including how important it is for people to submit their applications early to avoid missing

the deadline for Pandemic-EBT. OCRA also included information about the change in the Public Charge Rule, which affects the most vulnerable immigrant families applying for CalFresh.

OCRA Hosts Webinar for Transition-Age Students on How to Prepare for Life After High School.

Students in Fullerton High School District's Transition Program joined OCRA for an exciting and interactive discussion about how to prepare for life after high school. Scott Barron, OCRA's Peer Advocate, worked with the 23 participants to identify the necessary services and supports a student may need to transition into the community from their family's home. Scott, via Google Hangouts, also encouraged the students to work closely with their regional center service coordinator and entire circle of support to explore different living options before making a final decision. He also recommended that the participants develop a detailed plan and allow enough time to make sure appropriate services are in place before they move. The students appreciated the chance to share their hopes, dreams, and fears with their peers. Many attendees found comfort in knowing they are not alone. Scott plans to schedule more self-advocacy trainings with this group soon.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Adam Sees His Mother After a Total Visitor Ban Due to COVID-19.

Adam's mother contacted OCRA for help with visitation rights for Adam to see her at his group home. Mother and son had not seen each other for three months because his residential provider instituted a total ban on visitation due to COVID-19. Adam's Zoom calls with his mother fell short because he missed her dearly and wanted to see her in person. After Adam and his mother could not reach a resolution with the provider, OCRA contacted the provider and discussed ideas with him for safe visits. OCRA recommended a revised visitation policy where residents can meet with their family one at a time in the backyard of the group home, provided everyone wears masks and observes the six-foot social distancing rule per CDC guidelines. OCRA contacted the county government where Adam is located and confirmed OCRA's proposal would be lawful. The provider adopted OCRA's proposal and less than a week later, Adam was reunited with his mother again, from a distance.

Carlos Returns Home During Pandemic.

Carlos lives in a board and care home. Carlos could not return home due to allegedly violating the stay-at-home order issued due to COVID-19. Carlos contacted OCRA for help to return to his home. OCRA contacted the regional center to support efforts to get Carlos back home safely. The regional center coordinated transportation and found a temporary facility for Carlos to quarantine for 14 days. OCRA remained in contact with Carlos during this time to ensure he understood the process to return to his board and care home per his wishes. After 14 days, Carlos returned home.

Claudia Keeps Legal Right to Make Decisions About Her Health.

Claudia had a heart attack that resulted in hospitalization. She lives alone. When she became stable, the hospital contacted her estranged daughter and prevented Claudia from returning home without her daughter's consent and participation at the discharge meeting. This upset Claudia, so OCRA attended that discharge meeting at her request. OCRA explained to the hospital it was prohibited from giving away Claudia's legal right to make her own decisions about healthcare because she was not conserved and had not delegated decision-making powers to any agent. The hospital accepted that Claudia was the ultimate decision-maker and Claudia returned home two days later.

REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Claire's Team Works Together So She Can Leave a State Hospital.

The regional center referred Claire's mother to OCRA for help. Claire served her time in jail and was supposed to move into a regional center group home. When the group home staff arrived to pick her up, they learned she was transferred to a state hospital due to a severe behavioral outburst. OCRA contacted Claire at the state hospital, and she was happy to receive OCRA's help to live in the community. OCRA provided technical assistance to Claire's public defender to support Claire's right to have behavioral treatment in the least restrictive environment in the community. The regional center secured a group home for her and the court scheduled a placement hearing. OCRA attended the hearing and spoke about community placement, services, and supports. Claire was released from the state hospital. OCRA attended her first IPP meeting at the new group home, where she is living with supportive staff.

OCRA Helps Rafael Finally Get Services and Supports at Home.

Rafael is an adult who was never particularly engaged with his regional center. One afternoon, during a family outing to the community pool, Rafael became upset and left the area. He spent the afternoon wandering around his city. After several hours, he approached a federal courthouse and was confronted by a federal marshal. The ensuing events left Rafael in the hospital recovering from a bullet wound and facing federal criminal charges. Thanks to his public defender and OCRA, the federal charges were dropped. But, Rafael lingered in the hospital long after he had recovered. He eventually returned home to live with his grandmother. However, his regional center did not ensure that proper services were in place and Rafael spent his days bored and restless at home. Rafael's family contacted OCRA for help. OCRA quickly contacted Rafael's newest service coordinator and asked for an IPP meeting to discuss implementing his services. During the meeting, OCRA helped establish a list of services to start soon. Shortly after, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, effectively shutting down most services. This included the behavioral therapy Rafael so critically needed. One night, Rafael reported feeling extremely anxious and his grandmother took him to the emergency room. Unfortunately, the hospital then placed him under a civil commitment. OCRA stepped in again, this time to advise Rafael and his family of his rights during the commitment process and ensure regional center services would be in place once he is released. Today, Rafael is receiving mental health services and behavioral therapy three times per week. His regional center is also pursuing vocational training to help Rafael with his ultimate goal to live independently.

Julie Impresses Her IPP Team After Many Struggles.

Julie has spent most of her life in institutions. Last year, she returned to the community in an Enhanced Behavioral Supports Home (EBSH), but within a couple months, reverted to self-injurious behaviors. In less than six months, the EBSH gave notice she must move. Julie landed in temporary housing after multiple psychiatric holds while the regional center searched for a new placement. OCRA spoke with Julie about what she likes and dislikes about her temporary placement, why it works better for her than the EBSH, and what she wants in a future placement. OCRA encouraged her to voice all these thoughts and opinions at her next IPP meeting. OCRA helped her come up with keywords to remind her about each thought. Julie's staff then typed out these keywords and Julie had her

agenda ready. At the IPP meeting, Julie answered all the team's questions and then announced that she had some things to say. She explained her talking points and answered some more questions. The regional center noted they learned new information from Julie and explained the efforts they were making to find her a new placement. The regional center thanked her for preparing her thoughts for the meeting, and she appreciated everyone's participation saying, "That's how you run a meeting!"

REGIONAL CENTER – ELIGIBILITY

Kate Obtains Regional Center Eligibility.

Kate's public defender contacted OCRA for help obtaining regional center eligibility. OCRA agreed to review Kate's records and advise them about any additional evidence they need to gather. Mainly, Kate needed documentation of her disability originating before age 18. Following the advice, the public defender obtained additional evidence that showed Kate's substantial disability before she was 18. The regional center found Kate eligible for services.

REGIONAL CENTER – SERVICES

Jenny Receives Over 200 Hours in Behavior Respite.

Jenny's sick father was having major surgery and her grandmother is confined to bed. They each require constant care. Jenny's mother provides care for Jenny, her father, and her grandmother, and during the pandemic, the family made the difficult decision to suspend services with their in-home caregiver. The members of Jenny's household are more vulnerable to COVID-19, and the family did not want to risk possible exposure from the caregiver, who provides support to multiple households. When Jenny began staying home from school every day, it became clear her family needed more support. Her mother turned to the regional center to request additional respite, but the regional center said they already granted Jenny the maximum respite hours allowed, the family had parental responsibility, and the family should ask for more IHSS hours. Jenny's mother already requested an increase in IHSS hours, and only received 6 more per month. Jenny's mother is her IHSS provider, so the family would not get relief from an increase in IHSS hours. The family did not want to risk exposure to COVID-19 by bringing a new provider into the household.

Jenny's mother contacted OCRA after she appealed the regional center's decision. OCRA could not attend the informal meeting, but helped Jenny's mother draft arguments to explain the need for more respite hours and why IHSS would not resolve the family's needs for additional support in the home. OCRA also helped her prepare arguments before the regional center's purchase of services committee. After presenting her arguments to the committee, the regional center increased Jenny's respite from 40 hours per month to over 200 hours per month. The regional center also agreed to convert Jenny's hours from traditional respite to behavior respite, which will address Jenny's challenging and sometimes risky behaviors.

Matt Keeps His Early Start Services.

Matt is a three-year-old boy with autism. The regional center told Matt's mother they would be cutting off his early intervention services through the Early Start program on his third birthday in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. His school district had not done the transition services it needed to nor did it offer him services. Matt's mother contacted OCRA for help appealing the regional center's proposed action. OCRA provided Matt's family with information regarding Early Start and transition services. Specifically, OCRA provided the California Department of Developmental Services Directive, which extends Early Start services during the stay-at-home order if the child's school district has not begun to provide services. Per the Directive, the family requested the regional center continue Matt's Early Start services. Shortly after the family sent the Directive, the regional center extended Matt's services through the summer. Matt will continue to receive services to learn basic skills and prepare for school.

Dominic's Regional Center Transfer Request is Reinstated.

Dominic's mother contacted OCRA for help with Dominic's regional center transfer request. Dominic did not live in the same city as his brothers and wanted to move to be closer to them. However, six months went by after Dominic's transfer request with no progress and no update from the regional center. OCRA got Dominic's permission to contact the staff responsible for facilitating the transfer. OCRA spoke with staff at both regional centers, reminded them of the guidelines for transfer requests, and requested that prompt attention be given to Dominic's request. Less than a week later, the transfer was in progress.

Matthew Gets a New Home.

Matthew lived in a home with four roommates. Although Matthew had supported living services, he was not getting the support he needed. The shared spaces, including the bathroom, were constantly dirty. One roommate brought bedbugs into the home several times. Matthew repeatedly called his service coordinator and requested a new home and a new supported living services agency. His situation stayed the same for months. OCRA contacted the regional center on Matthew's behalf, explained Matthew's concerns, and requested an IPP meeting. Before the IPP meeting occurred, a new supported living services agency took on Matthew's case, and Matthew moved to a new home.

Crystal Gets Funding to Stay in the Least Restrictive Setting Until Her Housing Voucher is Activated.

Crystal had applied for a housing voucher and was on a waiting list when she had to be hospitalized for treatment related to her disability. After she was stabilized and returned home, she became homeless and needed placement. Options were very limited, and restrictive settings such as a group home had not worked out in the past. She ended up in a motel with a small kitchen, and had an independent living skills provider to help her two hours per day. Crystal liked living in the community and being independent, but could not afford to live in the motel on her monthly public benefit amount. Her parents were helping her by paying \$500 per week for housing, but it was a financial hardship for them to continue. The regional center denied funding for Crystal to remain in the motel until her housing voucher was activated. OCRA agreed to advocate for regional center funding and to represent Crystal at an IPP meeting. Before the IPP was scheduled, the regional center agreed to fund the motel.

Rodney Moves Forward in Search For Accessible Residence.

Rodney had been asking his regional center service coordinator for help to find an accessible apartment for over a year. When OCRA asked, the regional center agreed to fund two vendors to help in the search for an apartment. Several months later, Rodney called OCRA again and asked for more help because he had seen no apartments. OCRA asked Rodney's service coordinator why neither of the two vendors were taking Rodney to see apartments. The service coordinator said Rodney had seen many places, but did not like them. OCRA asked the service coordinator

for a list of the apartments the vendor said they took Rodney to see. The service coordinator sent a list of 283 apartments that one vendor claimed Rodney refused over the previous three months. OCRA went over the list with Rodney, who reported he had never gone to see any of them. OCRA suggested a new reporting procedure to the service coordinator to make sure Rodney actually saw apartments. The new procedure requires that during the first week of each month, both vendors submit a list to the service coordinator showing the apartments they took Rodney to see. The list is to contain the addresses of the apartments and the dates on which Rodney saw them. The service coordinator will review the list with Rodney each month to make sure Rodney is receiving the services as written in his IPP. The service coordinator agreed to this new process.

Erick Receives Needed Supports During Pandemic.

Erick is stuck at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Erick lives with his mother, who is his full-time caretaker. He has significant behaviors and requires a high level of medical care. Since Erick has been home all the time, his behaviors have escalated and his mother needed additional support from the regional center. Erick receives a lot of services, but now he actually needed 2:1 staffing to remain safely in his home. The regional center had a hard time understanding the degree of care that Erick requires, and his mother had a hard time articulating this need. OCRA represented Erick at an IPP meeting with the regional center to explain Erick's coverage needs. The regional center then agreed to provide additional respite and personal care hours.

Gary Receives Rental Assistance from the Regional Center.

Gary lost his job of six years. He could not find another job during the COVID-19 pandemic and fell behind on his rent. Gary's independent living skills staff contacted OCRA for help. OCRA represented Gary at an IPP meeting and advocated for the regional center to pay Gary's rent during his job search. Gary's staff supported his request by describing his efforts to obtain rental assistance from other sources and to find a new job. The regional center agreed to provide rental assistance to Gary during his job search, and also to connect him with the Department of Rehabilitation for employment assistance.

Sandy Obtains Equipment to Remain Safe in the Community.

Sandy is a young child whose safety is a concern because she runs away and does not display safety awareness with common dangers. A physical therapist conducted a durable medical equipment assessment and recommended that Sandy receive a larger-sized safety vest. OCRA participated in an equipment review request with the regional center's Behavior Modification Review Committee. OCRA analyzed Sandy's records, including her IPP, behavioral therapy reports, and IHSS protective supervision information, and found that Sandy benefits from using a safety vest during community outings. Sandy received the larger-sized safety vest and is now safe in the community with her family.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Kelvin Becomes Eligible for Special Education Services After OCRA Intervenes.

The regional center asked OCRA for help accessing special education services for Kelvin. The school district had not assessed Kelvin, despite the parent's and regional center's attempts to communicate his needs. He couldn't attend school without special education services. OCRA informed the school district it would file a compliance complaint for their failure to assess Kelvin for special education eligibility. The school district responded to OCRA and agreed to assess Kelvin and provide sufficient services for him to attend class during the assessment process. OCRA represented Kelvin's at his first IEP meeting, where he was made eligible for special education services. OCRA requested compensatory special education services for Kelvin. Kelvin was receiving special education services and attending school prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Javier Obtains Better Placement and Supports from the School District.

Javier's father contacted OCRA after attending an IEP meeting for his 11-year old son. The IEP meeting was not productive because the school district staff did not listen to his concerns about Javier's education. Javier's father explained that the school district convinced him to place Javier in a general education class that included music instruction. Javier found the classroom too loud, experienced sensory overload, and came home from school in tears every day. Javier had severe anxiety attacks and exhibited

serious behaviors. OCRA attended a follow-up IEP meeting with Javier's father and helped explain his concerns to the school district. The IEP team agreed to perform a Functional Behavior Assessment to identify the triggers of Javier's anxiety and develop a Behavior Intervention Plan. The IEP team also agreed to change Javier's placement, to ease his anxiety, until the assessment is completed. In addition, because Javier enjoys drawing, he will attend an art class instead of music instruction. Javier's father believes these changes will help relieve his anxiety and sensory overload issues.

Quincy Returns to School.

Quincy is a 20-year-old man whose family recently relocated from another state. Quincy became a regional center consumer shortly thereafter. Quincy began attending a school for students with significant behavioral needs, and his behavior greatly improved. After Quincy had several medication changes, school staff noticed his behaviors at school intensified. Eventually, Quincy's school called 9-1-1 twice, after they could not deescalate his behavior. Police and paramedics arrived to the scene on both occasions, and Quincy was taken away. His family was concerned he would end up hurt if he continued to have police interaction while in an escalated state. Quincy's family decided that he should no longer attend school because as a student of color, something bad could happen to him under the wrong circumstances. Quincy's service coordinator referred them to OCRA. OCRA met with Quincy and learned that he did want to return to school, if the school could create a plan that would prioritize his safety. By that point, Quincy had been out of school for three months. OCRA attended a two-part IEP meeting with Quincy and his family and helped develop a plan of action where Quincy would slowly reintegrate into school. The school and family agreed to share information about his treatment, mood, and school issues to insure everyone was on the same page. With these changes in place, Quincy will return to school with safety precautions and a support team better prepared to meet his needs.

Ian Returns to School with Transportation Services.

Ian moved to a new school district in Fall 2019. On the way home from school one day, he became physically aggressive towards a staff person and another student. The school and transportation agency decided to stop taking Ian to and from school until they found a new vehicle and staff to transport him. Ian's mother contacted OCRA after a month passed with

Ian not attending school because he had no transportation. OCRA contacted the school to remind them of their obligations to follow Ian's IEP and make sure he receives educational services. After OCRA contacted the school, Ian's transportation services resumed, and he returned to school.

School Agrees Cade is Eligible for an IEP and Specialized Placement.

Cade, a 5-year-old child, had a difficult kindergarten year. The school said Cade was not eligible for an IEP and refused his parents' repeated requests for assessments. Cade engaged in behaviors that harmed himself, other students, and staff. The school responded by disciplining him, including frequently suspending him. By the time OCRA entered the picture, Cade had not been in his classroom regularly in months. OCRA worked extensively with the school district's attorney. The school agreed to assess Cade for special education eligibility. Once those assessments were complete, OCRA represented Cade at two IEP team meetings. The team found Cade eligible and discussed various placement possibilities. The final offer, which the parents enthusiastically accepted, was a specialized public school program that provides intensive behavior and counseling services. Children usually stay six months to two years in this classroom, to acquire the skills needed to succeed in a traditional classroom setting.

Chase Gets a Distance Learning Plan and Live Remote Speech Therapy.

Chase's mother contacted OCRA for help reviewing his IEP and had questions about who was responsible for providing educational services, given the COVID-19 pandemic. Chase's mother had been trying to obtain a distance learning plan and live remote speech therapy services for him, with no success. While the school offered to review Chase's recorded videos and provide feedback, this did not account for Chase's struggle to focus without a live person to look at and listen to. OCRA advised Chase's mom of his rights to educational services, given COVID-19, his right to a distance learning plan, and to have that plan reviewed every two weeks. OCRA reviewed Chase's records and advised his mother as to the best arguments for obtaining his needed services remotely. Chase's mother called back with tears of joy expressing that using those strategies, she obtained a distance learning plan for Chase and live remote speech therapy sessions with a speech pathologist.