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I. INTRODUCTION

Disability Rights California provides state-wide clients' rights advocacy services for regional center consumers, under a multi-year contract with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), through the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA). The contract was renewed effective July 1, 2016, for a 5-year period ending June 30, 2021. OCRA completed the fifth year of this five-year contract. This annual report covers July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

During the past year, OCRA resolved 8,155 issues for 5,248 consumers, which represents a decrease from last year in clients served (6,168 last year) and issues handled (9,620 last year), but still higher than the required number (7,560 issues per year). Despite this lower number, staff took on more high-level hearing cases, attended more meetings, and reviewed more assessments for clients in restrictive settings than last year. OCRA held 430 trainings during the last fiscal year, presenting to approximately 13,474 people. This is a 27% decrease in attendees from the same reporting period last year. Both decreases in numbers could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staff vacancies. See section II.A.4 for details on trainings.

Between July 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020, OCRA conducted 199 outreaches compared to 251 from January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021. This is a 26% increase from the first half of the year to the second half. OCRA staff achieve positive results for clients with a variety of legal issues as shown in the statistics and Advocacy Report. OCRA clients also reported high satisfaction with OCRA services. See section II.D for more information.

OCRA operates offices throughout the state staffed by at least one Clients' Rights Advocate (CRA) and one Assistant/Associate Clients' Rights Advocate (ACRA). Staff are accessible and strive to understand the needs of the local community. OCRA also has a team of staff dedicated solely to outreach and training. This outreach team has a Peer Advocate, two Outreach Coordinators, a Supervising Attorney, and a Managing Attorney. OCRA also employs Statewide CRAs and ACRA's who serve clients in offices with higher caseloads, offices with vacancies, and handle community integration work. A list of staff and office locations as of June 30, 2021, is attached as Exhibit A.

All OCRA offices operate under the same core advocacy principles and standards. Staff in each office remain flexible to meet the needs of the

local regional center's consumers. During non-pandemic times, some hold office hours inside regional center offices to be accessible to consumers and regional center staff at those locations. Others travel to meet with consumers, family members, or groups in remote locations. OCRA staff listen and learn about the needs of regional center client communities and strive to meet those unique needs.

II. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Disability Rights California's contract with DDS requires performance objectives as established in Exhibit A, Page 14, Paragraph M, of the contract. Each of the specific required outcomes is discussed in the following Sections A through F. The contract does not set specific numbers for the performance outcomes.

A. Services are provided in a manner that maximizes staff and operational resources.

OCRA's tradition of serving people with developmental disabilities continues as we handled 8,155 issues for regional center consumers during the past fiscal year. OCRA served slightly fewer clients with fewer issues than last year. This is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. OCRA saw a significant decrease in calls at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, likely because people were trying to meet basic needs and adapt to a new way of life. As the pandemic continued through this fiscal year, OCRA staff and management came up with new ways to reach out to clients, families, and community groups. OCRA held large and small meetings with stakeholders to listen to needs. Staff provided more trainings during the second half of the fiscal year to continue to reach new clients and reconnect with previous clients. Also, compared to the last review period, staff took on more high-level hearing cases (25 to 33), attended more meetings (410 to 515), and reviewed more assessments (196 to 318) for clients in restrictive settings.

OCRA had longer than usual staff vacancies this review period and hiring was more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although OCRA uses statewide, often bilingual, CRAs and ACRA's when staff are out of the office, vacancies can be hard for clients and family members who trust the previous staff person. This can result in fewer calls to the office, until the new staff in the office make connections, build trust, and perform outreach. The statistics, attached as Exhibit B and discussed below, show the wide variety of issues and the many cases handled by OCRA staff. The

advocacy report, attached as Exhibit C, covers January through June 2021, and tells the stories and impact of individual cases.

1) Advocacy Reports

OCRA's client case work is best exemplified in the advocates' written stories about cases or outreaches with practical value that demonstrate a good outcome, explain the law, or teach a lesson. In an effort toward brevity, the stories are just a summary to reflect a sampling of the cases that OCRA handled. A longer Advocacy Report is available upon request. OCRA summarized cases for the first half of the fiscal year in the summer and fall 2020 Advocacy Report, which OCRA submitted in the Semi-Annual Report. The summaries from January 2021 through June 2021 are compiled and attached as Exhibit C. The report uses fictional first names of clients to improve readability while maintaining confidentiality.

Advocacy stories show the extraordinary value and diversity of OCRA's work. Many cases reflect resolution of systemic problems through direct representation, involvement on committees, or the effective relationships OCRA has with regional center and other agencies. The variety of cases OCRA staff handle are typically in response to the calls the office receives from a client or someone calling on behalf of a client. Sometimes, regional center staff will tell OCRA about systemic issues they see, and OCRA staff investigate on behalf of individual clients.

During this reporting period, OCRA staff provided direct representation in a range of different problem areas such as public benefits, health care, regional center services, community placement, and special education.

During the past year in particular, OCRA responded to a large number of requests for help with Social Security cases. The Social Security Administration closed its offices because of the pandemic and clients had trouble reporting income and events and appealing adverse actions. OCRA responded to these issues and we highlight four Social Security cases here.

Devon's SSDI is Reinstated and His Overpayment is Cleared.

Devon is a man with Down syndrome who loves his job. He receives Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. One day, he received notice from Social Security that his disability had ended and he had an overpayment of \$22,130. Devon and his parents asked OCRA for help. OCRA explained the appeals process and subsidy, which is where an employer gives an employee extra help and fewer job duties, but pays the

same as an employee who does not get extra help and performs all the job duties. OCRA advised Devon to file an appeal and then spoke with his supervisor and job coach. OCRA explained subsidies to them as well, and asked Devon's supervisor to complete form SSA-3033, which documents an employee's subsidies and extra help. OCRA submitted the form to Social Security. Once Social Security completed its review of Devon's appeal and subsidies, it decided his disability is continuing. Social Security reinstated his SSDI benefits and cleared the \$22,130 overpayment from his record.

OCRA Helps Carl Restore His SSI Benefit Amount.

Carl is a minor child who had been receiving SSI at the maximum child rate for several years. His father became disabled and began receiving SSDI benefits. Carl and his brother each started receiving \$348 per month from their father's SSDI. Carl received a notice from SSI saying that his SSI was reduced to just \$2 per month because of the SSDI. OCRA checked the SSI deeming rules and found that Carl should be receiving \$379 per month from SSI along with his \$348 from SSDI. OCRA filed an appeal on Carl's behalf and attended an informal conference with Social Security. OCRA explained why Carl should be receiving \$379 from SSI, based on the deeming rules for a two-parent household with two minor children. The Social Security representative agreed and said Carl's SSI benefit would increase to \$379 per month. Carl will also receive retroactive benefits for the months his SSI benefits were mistakenly reduced.

Victor Receives \$47,000 Underpayment and Does Not Have to Pay Back \$27,000.

Victor received notice he was overpaid \$27,000 in SSI benefits because he was receiving \$1,300 per month from a civil law suit settlement. His representative payee did not report the \$1,300 of unearned income, and because it was more than the maximum monthly SSI benefit, his SSI was terminated. OCRA advised his representative payee to file an appeal requesting an informal meeting with an SSI representative. OCRA reviewed Victor's information and prepared a case statement for the informal meeting with SSI. At the informal meeting, OCRA explained there should not be an overpayment because Social Security should have determined Victor's eligibility for Disabled Adult Child (DAC) benefits when his father retired in 2001. If Victor was receiving DAC benefits when his civil suit settled in 2002, the \$1,300 each month would not have impacted his DAC benefit, since DAC is not a needs-based benefit like SSI. Social Security determined Victor was eligible for DAC benefits from his father's

record starting in 2001. His DAC benefit would be \$1,113 per month. Because the benefit was retroactive, minus the SSI benefits he was already paid, Social Security owed him an underpayment of \$47,000 from 2001 to 2020. Since the DAC program does not reduce the benefit because of Victor's monthly settlement payment, his overpayment was cleared. Because of OCRA, he went from owing \$27,000 to owing nothing, and gaining \$47,000 in back-payment of benefits. Also, he started getting Medicare coverage linked to the DAC benefit.

Social Security Waives Overpayment Incurred During COVID-19 Pandemic.

Daniel's family received notice he had an SSI overpayment during the COVID-19 pandemic and called OCRA for help. Daniel is a minor and his SSI amount depends on his parent's income, how many siblings he has, and if any of the siblings have disabilities. OCRA reviewed the parent's income. The income information in the SSA overpayment notice did not match the parent's paystubs. The family could not report their income to SSA during the COVID-19 pandemic because the local SSA office was closed. OCRA helped the family file an appeal and agreed to represent Daniel at his informal conference with SSA. At the informal conference, OCRA explained to Social Security that its own directive says some overpayments incurred during COVID-19 can be waived. OCRA asked SSA to apply the directive to Daniel's case and waive the overpayment. SSA explained that because of the pandemic, their office had not applied all the parent's income on time and made estimates for their wages, which resulted in the overpayment. Since this was not the family's fault and some overpayments that originated during the pandemic can be waived, SSA agreed to waive the entire overpayment.

2) Analysis of Consumers Served

OCRA handled 8,155 cases from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. Exhibit B contains the complete compilation of data for the fiscal year.

The data has been compiled by:

1. Age
2. County
3. Disability
4. Ethnicity
5. Race
6. Gender
7. Living Arrangement

8. Type of Problem (Problem Codes)

9. Service Type

The reports included here are in non-table format so they are accessible to individuals who use screen-readers. Although the data is still contained in grids, each row of the table is self-explanatory as read from left to right and does not require the navigational reference of a table header row for context.

Consistent with previous years, the largest number of consumers OCRA served by age during this time period, 2,036 out of 5,248, were individuals in the 3-17-year age group. 39 percent of OCRA's clients are in this age group. This is slightly higher than the percentage in this age group served by regional centers – 36 percent, according to the most recent DDS Fact Book, 16th Edition. The next largest was the 23-40 age group with 1,422 people served or 27 percent of OCRA's clients.

For cases where gender is recorded, OCRA has traditionally served more males than females, with 67.0 percent of the consumers served being male and 31.0 percent being female in this reporting period. Regional centers also serve more males than females, according to the most recent DDS Fact Book. As of January 2018, regional centers served 65.0 percent male compared to 35.0 percent female.

OCRA's statistics also include the client's disability. The options are the developmental disabilities defined by state law (autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, intellectual disability, or the 5th category). There is an option for "dual diagnosis" which is a person who has any disability defined by state law, plus a co-occurring mental health disability. Almost half of OCRA's clients are people with autism, whether alone or dually-diagnosed, at 47 percent. Per the most recent DDS Fact Book, 37.6 percent of the regional centers' clients have autism. People with autism are over-represented as OCRA clients. 616 OCRA clients have a dual diagnosis, or 12 percent. This number may be lower than the actual number of OCRA clients who have both a developmental disability and a mental health disability. First, there is stigma associated with having a mental health disability, so people may not disclose. Second, almost half of OCRA's clients are minors. Mental health diagnoses are often determined once people are older. It is important to track this, as OCRA serves many clients in restrictive settings or at risk of entering a restrictive setting, who often have dual diagnoses. The most recent DDS Fact Book has statistics for people having two or more developmental disabilities, but has no statistics on dual diagnoses.

Statistics on the ethnicity of consumers served for the year show OCRA's continuing commitment and success in reaching traditionally underserved communities. For example, 44 percent of consumers served by OCRA identified as Hispanic/Latino. This is higher than the 38.9 percent of regional center consumers identified as Hispanic/Latino, according to the most recent DDS Fact Book. This is reported under "ethnicity." Some callers to OCRA do not want to state whether they are Hispanic/Latino or non-Hispanic/Latino. If a caller declines to state, they are still included in overall numbers of clients, but not included in the Hispanic/Latino count.

African-American and Asian consumer data is under the report for "race" in this annual report. 10 percent of consumers served by OCRA identify as African-American. This is an increase for OCRA, and is higher than the 8.9 percent of regional center consumers according to the Fact Book. OCRA offices have targeted the African-American community for outreach and relationship-building, which may have contributed to this increase. Asian consumers make up 6.9 percent of regional center consumers, and 6 percent of consumers served by OCRA. Many OCRA offices have chosen the Asian community as their population to target with outreach. Some callers do not want to state their race. If a caller declines to state, they are still included in overall numbers of clients, but not included in any specific race count. OCRA also has an option for clients to identify as "two or more races," which would not capture clients who identify as one particular race. OCRA's goal to serve all underserved communities is especially important as we continue to review the Purchase of Service (POS) Data collected by regional centers under Welfare & Institutions Code Section 4519.5. OCRA staff attended local stakeholder meetings, joined local committees, and held internal discussions to further study and impact possible changes to reduce disparities again this year.

The percentage of consumers residing in the parental or other family home remains by far the largest number of service requests for consumers served by OCRA, with 5,776 service requests showing consumers living in the family home or 71 percent of the cases handled. The next largest group served is those living independently, with 950 service requests or 12 percent with this living arrangement. This is about the same as last year. Almost every OCRA office had a case for an unhoused client, with one office having 17. During this period, OCRA had 59 service requests where the client was unhoused.

3) Analysis of Consumers Assisted with Moving to a Less Restrictive Living Arrangement

For the past several years, developmental centers were the most common restrictive setting from which a consumer would move into the community. The law requires regional centers to notify OCRA about people living in restrictive settings such as developmental centers, IMDs, and MHRCs, and people whose community placements are at risk of failing. Because most consumers have moved out of developmental centers, OCRA receives fewer notifications overall, and very few about clients who have lived many decades in restrictive settings.

The Lanterman Act requires administrators of Enhanced Behavioral Support Homes (EBSHs) and Community Crisis Homes (CCHs) to send notifications about its residents to OCRA. Statewide, OCRA staff have participated in clients' Individual Behavior Support Team (IBST) meetings, reviewing clients' behavior plans as part of the team, and ensuring clients' rights are respected. It is important to maintain a relationship with the administrators and staff of these homes now serving clients formerly in restrictive settings for much of their lives.

The law also requires regional centers to notify OCRA about additional situations: clients whose 6500 commitments are expiring or have a hearing scheduled; clients under a 5250 or higher-level commitment; clients for whom a petition is filed for a Lanterman Petris-Short (LPS) conservatorship; and clients referred to Porterville Developmental Center for any reason or commitment.

OCRA staff review comprehensive assessments for clients in Porterville Developmental Center and Canyon Springs, IMDs, and MHRCs, and 4418.7 assessments when a client's community placement is at risk of failing. OCRA staff also regularly review Individual Behavior Supports Plans (IBSPs) for clients who live in EBSHs and CCHs. During this review period, OCRA staff reviewed 318 assessments and IBSPs, a significant increase from last year's 196.

OCRA staff attend a variety of meetings – Individual Program Plan meetings, Semi-Annual Review meetings, Transition Planning Meetings, Transition Review Meetings, 5-day and 30-day meetings held after a client is placed in the community, deflection meetings, meetings with potential providers, Individual Education Program meetings, Individual Behavior Support Plan meetings for clients in EBSHs and CCHs, among others. During a single “case,” OCRA staff may attend each IPP and transition

meeting for a client in an acute crisis unit at a developmental center, and then attend one or more meetings once they move into their new home in the community. During this review period, OCRA staff attended 515 meetings on behalf of clients in developmental centers, IMDs, MHRCs, or acute crisis units, or clients at risk of losing their community placements, or who had moved into EBSHs and CCHs. This is a significant increase from last year's 410 meetings. The increase in OCRA's work reviewing assessments and attending meetings could be because of the pandemic, with virtual meetings requiring no travel time, and the ability to review assessments remotely as well.

Assistance or representation in cases involving restrictive settings can include reviewing records, interviewing and developing a relationship with the client, attending a variety of meetings, negotiating through phone calls, drafting and filing documents for court, attending court dates, and advocacy for movement back to the community or additional services to stay in the least restrictive environment, usually the community.

Assistance or representation for the new notifications to OCRA about 5250 holds or 6500 commitments include speaking with the client about their wishes and speaking with the client's public defender, service coordinator, family members, or home administrators about possible placements, services, and supports. It also includes reviewing records, attending discharge planning meetings, or attending court. OCRA staff often educate about and advocate for the least restrictive environment. OCRA continues to receive very few notifications about LPS conservatorships. OCRA handled 42 cases where a regional center consumer was held under a 5150 or 5250 commitment. OCRA receives some 6500, 5250, and LPS notifications, but not all regional centers send them. OCRA created a chart for regional centers to use as a quick guide about notifications to send, including the newer requirements, and will continue working with regional centers about this responsibility.

Several OCRA staff members have cultivated relationships with judges and other court staff through trainings and being available for consultation when difficult cases come into their courtrooms. Judges, deputy district attorneys, and deputy public defenders have called OCRA to get involved in regional center consumers' cases that OCRA might not have otherwise known about. This includes clients in restrictive settings, about whom OCRA sometimes does not receive notice. Building these relationships and trust over time is crucial to better serve consumers in restrictive settings, at risk, or who require OCRA advocacy to get regional center eligibility or services. OCRA staff have attended 13 court hearings for

clients in restrictive settings during this review period, which is fewer than last year's 28. This could be due to many courts being closed and cases being continued. Of the court hearings staff attended, most were virtual.

4) Outreach/Trainings

Outreach and Training serve two important purposes: 1) notifying people about the availability of OCRA services and 2) educating people about the law and their rights. OCRA provides training on many issues to a wide variety of people. Attendees include consumers, family members, regional center staff and vendors, and community members. Training topics include, but are not limited to, consumers' rights, abuse and neglect issues, IHSS, Medi-Cal, regional center issues, special education, voting rights, SSI, rights in the community, alternatives to conservatorship, and self-determination.

During the last fiscal year, OCRA presented 430 outreach trainings, reaching approximately 13,474 consumers, families, service providers, regional center staff, and community members. OCRA had to cancel 25 trainings because of the COVID-19 pandemic. OCRA has several Zoom accounts with large capacity to hold trainings and conferences during the pandemic. During this review period, OCRA also planned a self-advocacy conference to take place soon after this period ends. It will be highlighted in the next Semi-Annual Report.

To help people from traditionally underserved communities, each OCRA office develops a target outreach plan. Each office targets at least six outreaches per year to a specific target group of people who are underrepresented in the office's catchment area. OCRA formed a team within OCRA during the last fiscal year to focus solely on outreach and training. This team is supervised by a Managing Attorney, and includes a Peer Advocate, two Outreach Coordinators – one for northern and one for southern California, and a Supervising Attorney. This Outreach Team advises staff in implementation of their target outreach plans. These are two-year plans each office creates based on prior outreach plans' results, new census data, and information from DDS about the ethnicity and race of consumers served by each regional center. This fiscal year is the first year of a two-year outreach cycle. In June 2021, OCRA staff completed outreach plans for the period from July 2021 through June 2023.

OCRA creates and presents new trainings for the disability community in English, Spanish, and other languages. Another way OCRA tries to reach the ethnic- and language-diverse communities is by using publications from

the DRC website as part of the training. DRC translates all new self-help publications posted online into the California threshold languages. Participants have commented it was nice to have guidance and materials in their language. The Outreach Unit within OCRA has been busy planning conferences and trainings held during this review period to be held in the next year. A detailed report on outreach and training for this review period is included as Exhibit D.

B. Issues and complaints are resolved expeditiously and at the lowest level of appropriate intervention.

From July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, OCRA resolved 8,155 issues for consumers. Of those, all but 33 were resolved informally. This means OCRA staff took 33 cases to hearing, or filed for hearing and the case ultimately resolved before the hearing. This is higher than last year's 25 hearing-level cases. These numbers are consistent with previous years, in that 99 percent of all the matters that OCRA handled were resolved without using hearings or court. Data showing this is attached as Exhibit E.

C. Collaborative and harmonious working relationships are fostered.

OCRA staff continue to collaborate with the local regional centers, DDS, stakeholders, and community members. Some examples of collaboration include serving on regional center diversity committees, disparity task force meetings, Bioethics Committees, Behavioral Modification Review Committees, Risk Assessment Committees, County Coordinating Councils, Supported Life Training Planning Committees, meetings with counties about benefits, services, and appeals issues, IHSS Statewide Advocates' Meetings, DS Taskforce and Implementation Workgroups, UCEDD CAC, State Hearings Division Stakeholder meetings, Fiesta Educativa planning committees, Health & Wellness Committee-Forensic Task Force, Criminal Justice Task Force, Multi-Agency Advisory Board (MAAB), DDS Plain Language and Directives Workgroup, Healthcare Task Force, Adult Transition Task Force, Resident Transition Advisory Group, Quality Management Advisory Group, and liaison meetings for the developmental center closures/transition, among others.

All office CRAs participate in meetings with their regional centers' Self-Determination Program Local Advisory Committees. Many have provided community trainings on self-determination. Many OCRA staff also provide training to regional center staff and vendors and meet regularly with regional center staff and community partners to share ideas and expertise on many subjects. When OCRA staff notice trends in legal issues of

regional center consumers, they offer training to regional centers on that problem area. One regional center's Family Resource Center called OCRA with a concern about consumers not having support when in the hospital, because of the pandemic. OCRA and DRC staff presented a training open to that regional center's staff, consumers, and family members on laws and rights to have visitors and supports, even during the pandemic. OCRA also provided several clients' rights trainings to a vendor in southern California.

Most OCRA offices meet regularly with regional center management to resolve systemic and individual client issues informally rather than through a hearing or complaint, when possible. This philosophy of collaboration is not only required by Disability Rights California's contract with DDS, but also recognizes some of the most effective advocacy takes place because of interpersonal relationships and informal advocacy. The success of this philosophy is demonstrated by the number of calls OCRA receives from varied sources, by its ability to resolve matters informally, and by its recognition as an excellent resource for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

1) Memorandums of Understanding

OCRA has established Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with each regional center that address individual needs, concerns, and method of operation. Generally, MOUs are updated as needed, including when the law changes. Meetings to review MOUs have been productive and positive. OCRA has very good working relationships with most regional centers. During this fiscal year, OCRA updated the MOU with the following regional centers: Alta California, Far Northern, Inland, Kern, Frank D. Lanterman, North Bay, North Los Angeles, San Diego, and Valley Mountain. OCRA has forwarded copies of all MOUs to DDS. The status of each revised MOU is listed in Exhibit F.

2) Meeting with Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA)

ARCA and OCRA meet regularly. OCRA met with ARCA often during this fiscal year, including extensive discussions around legislative and state budget issues. ARCA and OCRA also serve on committees together and keep regular phone and email contact with each other to discuss issues.

D. Consumers and families are satisfied with the services provided.

Disability Rights California recognizes the importance of consumer satisfaction. OCRA is committed to serving consumers and family members in a manner and with results that ensure consumer and family

satisfaction with the services provided. Survey results show positive consumer satisfaction over the past fiscal year. Members of the OCRA management team call back all responders who requested a call back, whether their responses were positive or negative. They also call all responders who gave a negative response and their contact information. OCRA takes negative responses seriously by remedying concerns or providing additional support to consumers.

The provision of clients' rights advocacy services is coordinated in consultation with the DDS contract manager, stakeholder organizations, and persons with developmental disabilities and their families representing California's multi-cultural diversity.

OCRA formerly worked through an OCRA Advisory Committee to help ensure satisfaction. During this reporting period, DRC's Board of Directors formed a new Community Engagement Committee to gather input from people with disabilities and their families, including people with developmental disabilities, representing California's multi-cultural diversity. OCRA is examining the best way to solicit input from the community, for example, OCRA's community listening sessions with the Latinx community have been informative. Expanding this concept and finding new forums tailored to different communities may yield better and more information.

1) Consumer Satisfaction Survey

OCRA measures consumer satisfaction by a survey developed jointly by staff, the OCRA Consumer Advisory Committee, and DDS. Fifteen hundred and fifty-three (1,553) surveys were mailed out. Three hundred and nineteen (319) people returned surveys. This represents a 21 percent return rate, similar to last year's 22 percent.

Of those responding to the questions, 96 percent felt they were treated well by the staff. This is the same as last year, so staff continue to be responsive to callers. "I was treated very well by Lori and Kristin. I was very worried and afraid. They gave me comfort with their knowledge. They were helpful." 87 percent of the respondents believed their call was returned within two days, an improvement to last year's 86 percent, as we continue to work on this area. "Muy agradecida por el apollo que me brindaron muy contenta que de por medio de la Sra Maria Rojas que contesto todas mis llamadas y especialmente a Jacqueline Miller." Translation: "Very grateful for the support you gave me, very happy that through Mrs. Maria Rojas who answered all my calls and especially Jacqueline Miller." 90 percent of the respondents reported that they

understood the information they received, which is slightly lower than last year's 91 percent. "Maitria and Brenda were very accommodating and compassionate. They listened to all my concerns. They would always simply informations are easy as possible for me to understand. I've speak to Maitria about hoping to meet her in person one day, or even stop by office to personally thank her myself. I wish this day is possible!"

92 percent of respondents felt their Clients' Rights Advocate listened to them, which is slightly lower than last year at 94 percent. "Rachel was very helpful and thorough. She listened and didn't rush me. If she didn't know the answer she asked a supervisor and got back to me. She made me feel heard & understood." 85 percent of respondents felt they were helped with their question or problem, which is the same as last year. "Alexander Scarlis Really Helped me get my Social Security Benefits Back. I am Really Thankful and Greatful for His Help and Service." 90 percent said they would ask their Clients' Rights Advocate for help again, which is slightly lower than last year at 91 percent. "We had great service. We were advised and cared for we would definitely use your services again. Thank yo so much." See Exhibit G, which discusses these survey results in more detail.

From the survey results and the positive written comments, which are uncorrected and reflect exactly what consumers and their families wrote, most consumers are satisfied with the services OCRA has provided to them. OCRA hopes to continue this satisfaction in the high 80 to high 90 percent range, while still finding ways to improve.

2) Letters of Appreciation

OCRA consumers and family members often take the time to write letters of appreciation. These kind words come in cards, letters, notes, and emails. The time they took to send them represents the high value of the work performed by OCRA staff. Below is just a sampling of the many letters received. OCRA is providing the letters of appreciation with the wording from the originals, including any grammatical errors, unless otherwise indicated. We have also edited client names.

"Hi Kristen, We finally had the hearing about the Speech Therapy case today. I wanted to thank you for all your help in getting prepared. The judge said that I did a good job in my opening statement. Thank you so much for your amazing help making it great and making me look good."

Maitria,
Thank you for your time,
patience and expertise regarding
our issues with ~~you~~ you were
wonderful to work with and we so
appreciate your diligence.
is now back IN school 9:30-2:30.

"Maitria, Thank you for your time, patience and expertise regarding our issues with xxx you were wonderful to work with and we so appreciate your diligence. Xxx is now back in school 9:30-2:30."

Muchas gracias Mariana como escuchaste si soy
elegible y gracias a tu alluda 😊😊

translation:

Thank you very much Marian. As you heard I
am eligible. Thank you for your help.

*"Muchas gracias Mariana como escuchaste si soy elegible y gracias a tu
allude 😊😊"*

Translation:

*Thank you very much Marian. As you heard I am eligible. Thank you for
your help."*

This is the final updated IEP with new goals and service minutes in place. I consider much of it a HUGE win and I have all of you to thank for your help and support. I really believe XXXX is set up for success and that the details written in here reflect her journey and needs. I am hopeful that in the future we will not have such a hard time fighting because the goals are set high yet are realistic and super important for her to succeed. I can't tell you how much you've all lightened my load and made this process finally bearable. Wishing you all an amazing summer and see you all in the fall!

"This is the final updated IEP with new goals and service minutes in place. I consider much of it a HUGE win and I have all of you to thank you for your help and support. I really believe XXXX is set up for success and that the details written in here reflect her journey and needs. I am hopeful that in the future we will not have such a hard time fighting because the goals are set high yet are realistic and super important for her to succeed. I can't tell you how much you've all lightened my load and made this process finally bearable. Wishing you all an amazing summer and see you all in the fall."

Hi Clifford,

Thank you for attending the meeting today. I know that the team decided to give _____ the IEP that she needs because you were there supporting her.

"Hi Clifford,

Thank you for attending the meeting today. I know that the team decided to give xxx the IEP that she needs because you were there supporting her."

Kristen,

Thank You so
much
for everything
you did to help us
in the appeal
process. -

With much appreciation

"Kristen,

*Thank you so much for everything you did to help us in the appeal process.
- With much appreciation."*

MUCHAS GRACIAS. Mary gracias ala abogada por toda
su ayuda ami hija Dios les bendiga Grandemente 🙏

*"MUCHAS GRACIAS. Mary gracias ala abogada por toda su ayuda ami
hija Dios les bendiga Grandemente" Translation: "Thanks a lot. Mary thank
you to the lawyer for all your her help for my daughter God bless you
greatly."*

Other things I want to tell you about the services I received from OCRA:
I'm so incredibly grateful for having OCRA as a resource. They
have helped us so many times over the years with the school
district, Regional Center, IHSS and Medical. I have also learned so
much from them and the online publications. They are a priceless resource!

"I am so incredibly grateful for having OCRA as a resource. They have helped us so many times over the years with the school district, Regional Center, IHSS and Medical. I have also learned so much from them and the online publications. They are a priceless resource!"

Good morning,

I just wanted to take a little time of your day to praise Johnanthony Alaimo. He was very helpful, understanding and patient with helping out my family. He is very professional and compassionate. He was able to navigate through unforeseen problems when they arose. We appreciate all his time and effort he took with our case. He was always in constant contact whether through email or phone with me and always had me informed with any updates on my case. We definitely need more hard workers like him. The only unfortunate thing was that I wasn't able to actually meet him in person due to Covid. He is an excellent worker and we are very grateful to have had him by our side working in our favor. Thank you for your time.

"Good morning,

I just wanted to take a little time of your day to praise Johnanthony Alaimo. He was very helpful, understanding and patient with helping out my family. He is very professional and compassionate. He was able to navigate through unforeseen problems when they arose. We appreciate all his time and effort he took with our case. He was always in constant contact whether through email or phone with me and always had me informed with any updates on my case. We definitely need more hard workers like him. The only unfortunate thing was that I wasn't able to actually meet him in person due to Covid. He is an excellent worker and we are very grateful to have had him by our side working in our favor. Thank you for your time."

Celeste Palmer,

Thank you so much for helping xxx get his money back. It is greatly appreciated.

“Celeste Palmer,

Thank you so much for helping xxx get his money back. It is greatly appreciated.”

I wanted to thank you and Yasmine for your help. Yasmine always patient with my multiple and frequent calls and you for making yourself available even on short notice. The information and guidance you provided was definitely a key factor in successfully getting more hours approved for
Thank you for what you do!

“I wanted to thank you and Yasmine for your help. Yasmine always patient with my multiple and frequent calls and you for making yourself available even on short notice. The information and guidance you provided was definitely a key factor in successfully getting more hours approved for. Thank you for what you do!”

To: Maria Salas / Maria Schloss
Office of Client's Rights Advocacy
530 B Street, Suite 400
San Diego, CA 92101

On behalf of my son
I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for a job well done. That was the fastest response from SSA ever.
Thank you so much. Should there be a need for your assistance in the future, I will never hesitate to ask you again.

“On behalf of my son xxx I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for a job well done. That was the fastest response from SSA

ever. Thank you so much should there be a need for your assistance in the future, I will never hesitate to ask you again.”

3) Cases handled in a timely manner

Consumers and families usually contact OCRA because something has gone wrong for them. Maybe they are losing a government benefit or their housing, or are facing another urgent situation. They may be worried about their rights. Even if something has not gone wrong and they just need information, OCRA staff must be responsive. OCRA’s policy is to return all calls as soon as possible, but no later than the close of the next business day. OCRA staff note this policy on the outgoing voicemail message that callers hear when reaching the office voicemail. OCRA staff note in the intake record if a client has a deadline or a timeline they must follow for their legal issue, such as a deadline to file an appeal. After noting this in the intake, advocates advise clients of timelines. Staff also prioritize cases when they identify a closer deadline.

OCRA measures its performance in this area through its consumer satisfaction survey; see Exhibit G, discussed more above. OCRA statistics show that 87 percent of all callers to OCRA received a call back within two days during the last fiscal year. This percentage is slightly higher than last year’s 86 percent. This question on the survey is meant to refer to the initial call to OCRA – when someone first calls for help. Once staff complete the intake with the caller, staff begin working on the case. It usually takes more than two days for staff to work on the case and call the client back with an update. This may be what survey responders think about when they answer this question, rather than the initial call they made to OCRA.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, OCRA staff have set up workspace in their homes to meet the needs of callers, while also caring for themselves and their family members also struggling with changes, fear, and anxiety.

E. Self-advocacy training is provided for consumers and families at least twice in each fiscal year.

Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 4433(d)(5), requires that the contractor providing advocacy services for consumers of regional center services provide at least two self-advocacy trainings for consumers. Disability Rights California’s contract with DDS mirrors this language. OCRA strongly believes in the importance of self-advocacy and requires

each of its 21 offices to provide at least one self-advocacy training for consumers per year, far exceeding the two mandated trainings. Many offices provide more than one training per year. This fiscal year, OCRA staff provided 39 self-advocacy trainings statewide. More were planned, but had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff may present any of the approved self-advocacy trainings. To date, OCRA has developed seven training packets for OCRA staff to use for trainings, in addition to the DDS Consumer Safety materials and the living arrangement options materials developed by DDS. Samples of the OCRA self-advocacy trainings (in both English and Spanish), were provided separately in a binder marked OCRA Training Materials with the 2007-2008 Annual Report. Past discussions with DDS's Contract Manager concluded OCRA should not submit duplicate training packets in annual reports. As always, OCRA welcomes comments from DDS on any training packets.

OCRA must report in its Annual Report a sample of the self-advocacy training surveys. OCRA has randomly selected consumer training satisfaction evaluations to include with this Annual Report. Almost without exception, consumers are pleased with OCRA trainings. A list of Self-Advocacy Trainings held last year is in Exhibit H.

Here are some comments from self-advocacy training satisfaction evaluations. OCRA is providing the comments with the wording from the originals, including any grammatical errors, unless otherwise indicated.

CLIENTS RIGHTS TRAINING

Question 5. HOW DID THIS TRAINING MEET YOUR NEEDS?

Response: *"It helped me to understand the role of the dept. overview of clients rights and was interactive with hypotheticals which helped to inbed the info."*

Response: *"Vital information that needs to be understood./learned to better service our clients."*

Response: *"Clients were engaged for the entire hour."*

Response: *"It broadened my knowledge for client's rights."*

Response: *"And help me learn about clients rights."*

Response: *"Further enforcement and learning of CA and advocacy rights and how to navigate when situations arises."*

Response: *“Very informative.”*

Response: *“Improved my knowledge on the client’s rights.”*

Response: *“It gave specific details and hypotheticals concerning Title 17.”*

Response: *“It helped me understand how individual rights may be infringed and I also learned that cases may vary.”*

Response: *“It helped me gain a better understanding of the different clients rights and the criteria for declining personal rights based on “good cause.”*

Response: *“Great instruction on access and service rights.”*

Response: *“Provided valuable information we can share with our students as they transition to adulthood.”*

Response: *“It was awesome.”*

Response: *“The hypotheticals are a great addition and really make us think about how the concepts can be applied.”*

Response: *“I really really like the hypotheticals..I think that really contributed to a better understanding of rights.”*

Question 8. OTHER COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS?

Response: *“Information was very helpful, for my SLS business, and I think it probably helps other businesses to and Westside regional Center.”*

Response: *“The presenter was very knowledgeable and easy to comprehend.”*

Response: *“Thank you for providing this training. This is also a good training for direct service professionals too.”*

Response: *“Very informative and family centered, very easy to understand such sometimes difficult information.”*

WHERE TO LIVE

Response: *“I think it was cool to talk about it.”*

III. TITLE 17 COMPLAINTS

CCR, Title 17, Section 50540, sets forth a complaint procedure whereby a regional center consumer, or his or her authorized representative, who believes a right has been abused, punitively withheld or improperly or unreasonably denied, may file a complaint with the Clients' Rights Advocate. The Complaint process is similar to that established by Welfare & Institution Code, Section 4731. There were no Title 17 Complaints filed during the last fiscal year, as noted on Exhibit I.

IV. DENIAL OF CLIENTS' RIGHTS

CCR, Title 17, Section 50530, sets forth a procedure whereby a care provider may deny one of the basic rights of a consumer if there is a danger to self or others or a danger of property destruction caused by the actions of a consumer. The Clients' Rights Advocate must approve the denial and submit a quarterly report to DDS by the last day of each January, April, July, and October. OCRA is including the reports concurrently with the contractual date to provide OCRA's reports. If this is not acceptable to DDS, OCRA will submit duplicate reports as requested. Attached as Exhibit J is the current log of Denials of Rights from the OCRA offices.

OCRA also presented several well-received trainings to providers of specialized homes on the denial of rights process and is available to do so in the future.

V. CONSUMER GRIEVANCES

Exhibit A, Paragraph 12, of the contract between DDS and Disability Rights California requires OCRA to establish a grievance procedure and to inform all clients about the procedure. DDS has approved the grievance procedure developed by OCRA. The procedure is posted prominently in both English and Spanish at each office. The grievance procedure is also available in Arabic, Armenian, Chinese (Simplified), Farsi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese. OCRA staff offer the grievance procedure in all letters to consumers or others who contact OCRA, when an office declines to provide the requested service to that person.

During the past fiscal year, OCRA handled 8,155 matters. There were five first-level grievances, five second-level grievances, and one third-level grievance filed by consumers or family members. Attached as Exhibit K is a chart detailing the grievances filed against OCRA during this period.

VI. COLLECTION OF ATTORNEY'S FEES

OCRA does not charge consumers, their families or advocates fees for services nor does OCRA seek to recover costs from these individuals. Clients' Rights Advocates who are licensed to practice law in California, or Assistant, Associate, or unlicensed Clients' Rights Advocates, all of whom work under the supervision of an attorney, can collect attorney's fees and costs similar to those collected by private attorneys or advocates for special education cases or other cases where there are statutory attorney's fees. OCRA collects fees only in some special education cases or Writs of Mandamus. Fees and costs may be negotiated at mediation or can be received where an Administrative Law Judge has determined that the petitioner is the prevailing party. Fees are collected from the opposing party, which is normally a school district. Costs include any expenses to the Petitioner or OCRA for suing, such as filing fees or costs of expert evaluations. Neither Disability Rights California nor OCRA ever collect attorney's fees from consumers.

OCRA received no attorney's fees during this annual reporting period. See Exhibit L.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES

The contract between DDS and Disability Rights California requires that annually Disability Rights California make recommendations to DDS on potential methods of enhancing the services that OCRA provides for regional center consumers.

The support of DDS through the years has made it possible for OCRA to effectively and efficiently serve consumers. We appreciate the positive relationships and ability to contact DDS when we have a concern about a client or facility. We enjoy serving on committees and sharing the feedback of our clients and their experiences in the system. We look forward to continued collaboration.

However, the demand for a higher level of OCRA service, such as direct representation, continues to increase. These demands and feedback come from consumers, regional centers, and family members. OCRA has also noticed a substantial increase in the number of cases involving people living in restrictive settings, coming out of jail, or losing their placements and being stuck in a setting like a hospital with no placement possibilities. These cases require a lot of staff time. OCRA must continue to look at providing additional staffing to better serve all clients, if we want to continue increasing the higher-level cases we handle each year. Across the state,

OCRA offices are reporting having more cases that require direct representation or limited scope representation, and fewer cases that could be handled with information or advice.

In offices that handle fewer cases, staff have an enhanced outreach plan, where they participate in more outreach events in the community and conduct more trainings, to increase the number of callers. OCRA has an Outreach Team to help with outreach goals. OCRA staff found creative ways to reach clients during the pandemic to help with legal issues and to reach the community by doing outreach and training by videoconferencing. When staff are able to return to working from offices, visiting clients face-to-face, and providing in-person trainings, some of their work day will need to be used again for travel time. This differs from the last 15 months, where most services have been provided remotely.

OCRA also recognizes the need to serve diverse communities with varying language needs, which means continuing to recruit and hire staff who speak diverse languages. OCRA strives to provide the highest level of service possible, given our resources. We can better do this with additional bilingual support and statewide staff to provide coverage for vacancies and support to enable staff to take on cases when we otherwise lack resources. OCRA also hopes to increase its disability diversity in staffing by finding qualified candidates for open positions who can bring their lived experience to OCRA.

To ensure that we can continue to provide high quality services, OCRA would appreciate additional resources to increase staffing to meet these unique needs while continuing to provide the high level of service to consumers already living in the community and consumers in restrictive settings and hoping to transition into the community.

VIII. CONCLUSION

OCRA provides exceptional service to many people with developmental disabilities throughout the state. OCRA handled 8,155 cases for 5,248 clients last year and provided 430 trainings to 13,474 consumers, family members, regional center staff and vendors, and interested community members – all while meeting each of its performance objectives. OCRA found itself handling novel issues that blended traditional advocacy with COVID-19 twists and restrictions. OCRA staff developed creative ways to adapt, reach clients, and provide trainings during the COVID-19 pandemic. OCRA looks forward to continuing to work with people with developmental disabilities and helping them access services and supports they need to

live the most independent and productive lives in the least restrictive environment. People with developmental disabilities have benefitted from OCRA's legal assistance at no cost to them and it is an honor for OCRA to continue to provide.