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## I. INTRODUCTION

Disability Rights California provides statewide clients' rights advocacy services for regional center clients, under a contract with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), through the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA). This annual report covers the period from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, which was the second year of a two-year contract starting July 1, 2021.

During the past year, OCRA resolved 9,023 issues for 5,849 clients. This is an increase from last year in both clients served (5,474 last year) and issues handled (8,386 last year). This increase is likely due to fewer COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, with more in-person activities and interactions in society at large, permitting more in-person contact to improve community engagement and trust. Throughout the entire reporting period, OCRA's staff providing direct advocacy services worked at least 2 days per week in offices located convenient to regional centers. Some advocates work from offices more than 2 days per week. Whether staff are working in offices or working remotely, they are accessible to regional center clients during regular business hours and for activities on evenings and weekends.

OCRA held 325 trainings during the past year, reaching about 12,352 people, an increase from the previous year. OCRA's advocacy staff conduct most trainings and outreach events. There is also a team dedicated solely to outreach and training, with a Peer Advocate, two Outreach Coordinators, a Supervising Attorney, and a Managing Attorney. We are pleased to have connected with more people served by regional centers this year, both through outreach and case handling. See section II.A.4 for more details on community engagement.

OCRA runs offices throughout the state staffed by at least one Clients' Rights Advocate (CRA) and one Assistant or Associate Clients' Rights Advocate (ACRA). Staff are physically and virtually available to area clients and connect with stakeholders to understand the needs of the local community. OCRA also employs Statewide CRAs and ACRAs who "float" to serve clients in offices with higher caseloads, offices with vacancies, and handle community integration work.

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 clients. Some hold office hours inside regional center offices to be accessible to clients and regional center staff at those

locations. Others travel to meet with clients, 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.

Toward the end of this reporting period, OCRA hired two Intake Assistants bilingual in English and Spanish. Intake Assistants answer phone calls for the busiest offices in the state. In a busy office, the CRA and ACRA are often on the phone already, in meetings, or at events, meaning they cannot answer their phone directly and callers leave voicemail messages. Intake Assistants increase the number of callers speaking directly with someone the first time, reducing the times callers must leave a message. Intake Assistants also input the client's basic information and the issue they are calling about into the case management system. Completing this task helps busy offices focus on clients, cases, and outreach. This is a pilot project that OCRA is reviewing for changes to ensure success for clients and staff.

OCRA staff are diverse in race, ethnicity, and disability. About 25 percent of OCRA's staff identify as people with disabilities, including people who are served by the regional centers, and many more are family members of people with disabilities. Lived experience with disability is a crucial part of providing excellent, empathetic service. Disability Rights California also learned in June 2023 that we are one of 10 legal employers in the state to be recognized by the State Bar of California with a Gold Seal for our efforts to champion and model diversity, equity, and inclusion as an employer.

See Exhibit A for a list of staff and office locations as of June 30, 2023.

## **II. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES**

The clients' rights advocacy contract requires performance objectives established in Exhibit A, Paragraph M. Each of the required outcomes is discussed in the following Sections A through F.

### **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 9,023 issues for regional center clients during the past fiscal year. OCRA served more clients with more issues than last year. 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 2023, and tells the stories and impact of individual cases or outreach events.

## **1) Advocacy Reports**

While reports show data and numbers, OCRA's stories show client outcomes. OCRA staff write summaries of cases or training events that demonstrate a good outcome, explain the law, or teach a lesson. In an effort toward brevity, the stories in this report are just a sampling of the cases OCRA handled. A longer Advocacy Report is available upon request. OCRA summarized cases for the first half of the fiscal year in the Semi-Annual Advocacy Report, which OCRA submitted to DDS previously. The summaries from January 2023 through June 2023 are attached as Exhibit C. The report uses fictional first names 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 centers and other agencies. The varied cases are typically in response to the calls the office receives from a client or someone calling on behalf of a client, including regional center staff.

OCRA staff provide direct representation in a range of different problem areas such as public benefits, health care, regional center services, community placement, and special education. Here are 3 regional center cases not duplicated in the Advocacy Report. These are typical of the direct services OCRA provides each day.

### **Katie Gets More Out-of-Home Respite.**

Katie lives with her mother and father. She receives 21 days per year of out-of-home respite care. Over 6 months, the regional center ignored her family's request for an increase in out-of-home respite care. OCRA contacted the regional center and requested a notice of action. OCRA advised the family to meet with the regional center and present new information along with a renewed request for out-of-home respite. The regional center approved an increase to 48 days per year of out-of-home respite care. Katie can now have the care she needs at a distinguished medical respite center while her parents take a needed break.

### **Natalie Gets More Support and Immediate Help with Housing Crisis.**

Natalie called OCRA during a very stressful time. Natalie and her children were served a notice to move out in 3 days. Natalie had limited ability to read and write. OCRA read and explained the notice to Natalie so she could understand her situation. OCRA then connected Natalie with her

regional center service coordinator and advocated for immediate help with her housing issue. OCRA helped Natalie increase her supported living services hours from 25 to 50 per month to help with moving and maintaining her housing voucher. OCRA supported Natalie through this difficult time. The regional center agreed to provide Natalie with a motel voucher so that she and her children had a place to live while they explored other housing options. OCRA also connected Natalie with a legal aid organization specializing in housing rights. OCRA's quick action protected Natalie from an eviction process which could have resulted in losing her housing voucher.

### **Caleb and Sarah Receive Overdue Regional Center Services.**

Caleb and Sarah's mother contacted OCRA for help getting regional center services, including respite and childcare services. The family was experiencing housing instability. While they were waiting for regional center services, they moved into an apartment run by a program for unhoused families. The move resulted in the family living in a different regional center's catchment area. Throughout the transfer process, OCRA advocated with both the original regional center and the new regional center through phone calls, emails, and an IPP meeting to ensure the children received the services they need during the transition. After the meeting, Caleb and Sarah started receiving their respite and childcare services.

## **2) Analysis of Clients Served**

OCRA handled 9,023 cases from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. Exhibit B has 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. Language
7. Gender
8. Gender Identity
9. Pronoun
10. Living Arrangement
11. Type of Problem (Problem Codes)
12. Service Type

### 13. Reason for Closing (Information and Referral service requests)

When looking at who OCRA serves, we compare OCRA client statistics statewide to regional center client statistics statewide. For this section, we use the DDS Fact Book, 18<sup>th</sup> Edition, which is the most recent Fact Book posted.

The regional centers serve 13.6 percent of clients in the 0-2 age category, who are Early Start clients until they turn age 3. OCRA served 1 percent of clients in this age range. Families with children this age may not yet have problems accessing regional center and generic resource and they likely do not know about OCRA's services. OCRA will look at more ways to reach out to this population.

The percentage served by regional centers and OCRA starts to even out as clients get older. The 3-5 years age group are 8 percent of clients served by OCRA, and 8.7 percent of regional center clients. The largest age group OCRA serves is 22-31 years old, at 18 percent. Regional centers also serve this age group at 18 percent.

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, and the 5<sup>th</sup> category). There is an option for "dual diagnosis" which is a person with any disability defined by state law, plus a co-occurring mental health disability. More than half of OCRA's clients are people with autism, whether alone or dually diagnosed, at 53.5 percent. 41.2 percent of the regional centers' clients are autistic. People with autism are over-represented as OCRA clients, which reflects the difficulty clients and families have accessing services. Just over 12 percent of OCRA clients have a dual diagnosis. This may be lower than the actual number of OCRA clients with both a developmental disability and a mental health disability. There is stigma associated with having a mental health disability, so people may not disclose when they call OCRA for help. Also, almost half of OCRA's clients are minors, and mental health diagnoses are often determined once people are older. It is important to track this data, as OCRA serves many clients in restrictive settings or at risk of entering a restrictive setting, who often have dual diagnoses.

Statistics on the ethnicity of clients served for the year show OCRA's continuing commitment and success in reaching traditionally underserved communities. For example, 42.2 percent of clients served by OCRA identified as Hispanic/Latino. This is higher than the 39.8 percent of regional center clients identified as Hispanic/Latino. 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 the overall numbers of clients, but not included in the Hispanic/Latino count.

African American and Asian client data is under the report for “race” in this annual report. 8.8 percent of clients served by OCRA identify as African American. This is slightly higher than the 8.6 percent of regional center clients. Asian clients make up 6.9 percent of regional center clients, and a higher 8.3 percent of clients served by OCRA. 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 in the count of each race. OCRA is pleased to have surpassed parity with the Asian and African American communities in terms of statewide populations.

For cases where gender is recorded, OCRA has traditionally served more males than females, with 66 percent of the clients served being male and 33.2 percent being female in this reporting period. Regional centers also serve more males than females. Regional centers served 65.7 percent male compared to 34.3 percent female. OCRA also captures data for gender identity and found that people who identify as nonconforming/non-binary are less than 1 percent of callers.

The percentage of clients living in the parental or other family home remains by far the largest number of service requests for clients served by OCRA, with 6,103 service requests showing clients living in the family home or 67.6 percent of cases OCRA handled. Regional centers have 64.3 percent of clients living in the family home. The next largest group served is those living independently, with 1027 service requests or 11.4 percent with this living arrangement. Almost every OCRA office had a case for an unhoused client, with one office (serving Harbor Regional Center clients) having 14 cases where the client was unhoused. During this period, OCRA had 82 service requests where the client was unhoused. Last year, that number was 64. We hear from clients and family members that living arrangements are a top concern for them.

OCRA tracks the reason for closing cases at the lowest level of service – Information and Referral. This is when OCRA provides basic information rather than specific legal advice. This can be a publication, an answer to a general question, or a referral to another legal aid organization or attorney. OCRA staff select one of 12 options when closing a case at this level. In 37 percent of cases, OCRA closed the case at this level because the caller

asked for information, referral, or a publication only. The next most common reason, at 15.5 percent, was the issue was not OCRA-eligible. This is when a client needs help with a family law issue, personal injury, or an issue that is not related to their disability. The third most common, at 11.5 percent, was when staff reviewed an assessment or document that OCRA is required to get, then took no further action. The report contains the frequency of the other 9 reasons.

### **3) Analysis of Clients Assisted with Moving to a Less Restrictive Living Arrangement**

The law requires regional centers to tell OCRA about people who live in restrictive settings and people whose community placements are at risk of failing. This includes people who live in, or are at risk of going into, Porterville Developmental Center, Canyon Springs, an Institution for Mental Disease, and state-operated Stabilization Training Assistance Reintegration (STAR) homes.

Regional centers are required to send OCRA comprehensive assessments and meeting notifications for clients in these restrictive settings, and clients living in Enhanced Behavioral Support Homes (EBSHs) and Community Crisis Homes (CCHs). Providers of EBSHs and CCHs must invite OCRA to Individual Behavior Support Team (IBST) meetings, and staff attend as many as possible with available resources.

OCRA's local and statewide CRAs and ACRAAs handle these cases. Assistance or representation often takes considerable time and many activities. These include speaking with the client about their wishes, reviewing records, attending a variety of meetings, negotiating through phone calls, drafting and filing documents for court, speaking with the client's public defender, service coordinator, family members, or home administrators about possible living arrangements and services, and attending discharge planning meetings and court dates, all to advocate for movement back to the community or for more services to stay in the community.

During this review period, OCRA staff took on 268 cases for people who live in Enhanced Behavioral Supports Homes and 224 cases for people who live in Community Crisis Homes. OCRA staff handled 105 cases for people who live in Porterville Developmental or Center Canyon Springs Community Facility. OCRA also helped in 48 cases where the client was in a STAR home for treatment. OCRA handled 44 cases for people in IMDs.



OCRA staff are committed to helping people live in the least restrictive environment, a mandate of the Lanterman Act. Here is one story highlighting how a client achieved community integration.

### **Monique Moves to a Less Restrictive Setting.**

Monique lived in a locked facility since 2020 because of her aggressive behavior. Monique did not like the locked facility and wanted to move to a less restrictive setting as soon as possible. OCRA reviewed assessments. OCRA also attended many meetings with the regional center, locked facility staff, and vendors. OCRA advocated for Monique to be moved to a less restrictive placement. Monique's team reviewed and discussed her transition plan to a new, less restrictive placement. Monique is now living in a Community Crisis Home. Although these homes are temporary, Monique is now integrating into her community.

### **4) Outreach and Training**

Outreach and training serve two important purposes: 1) telling people about the availability of OCRA services and 2) educating people about the law and their rights. OCRA targets underserved communities and strives to reach people who have never called OCRA for help. OCRA trains on many issues to a wide variety of people – clients, family members, regional center staff and vendors, and community members. Training topics include clients' 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 325 outreach trainings, compared to 307 the year before. These trainings reached about 12,352 clients, families, service providers, regional center staff, and community members. This is a large increase from 8,228 the year before. OCRA has continued to hold trainings and conferences virtually, while also attending more events in person. For the first half of the year, OCRA participated in 54 in-person events. For the second half, OCRA participated in 80 in-person events.

OCRA creates and presents new trainings for the disability community in English, Spanish, and other languages. OCRA provides information to ethnic- and language-diverse communities by using publications from the DRC website during outreach events. DRC translates all new self-help publications posted online into the California threshold languages.

Participants have commented that it was nice to have guidance and materials in their language.

OCRA staff wrapped up their target outreach activities that were part of their 2-year plans created for July 2021 through June 2023. Target outreach is designed to reach people from traditionally underserved communities. Each office targeted at least 6 outreaches per year to a specific target group of people who are underrepresented in the office's catchment area. For the next reporting period, OCRA staff will focus on their specific local disability community needs. Each local office will create a new outreach plan including at least 2 trainings to self-advocates and analyze how best to meet their local community needs using direct client input, feedback from families, and trends they experience. Exhibit D is a detailed report on outreach and training for this review period.

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

From July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, OCRA resolved 9,023 issues for clients. Of those, all but 21 were resolved informally. This means OCRA staff took 21 cases to hearing but handled or resolved all others at a lower level. These numbers are consistent with previous years, in that 99 percent of all matters OCRA handled were resolved without resort to hearings or the court. Data showing this is attached as Exhibit E.

OCRA has also set up informal resolution systems with regional center staff. When a client has an issue with their case management, their services, or another regional center problem, OCRA staff can call or email a designated person at the regional center to resolve the issue. This is also true for generic resources in some areas. For example, in Los Angeles County, legal aid advocates including OCRA staff, can call or email a designated manager in both IHSS and Medi-Cal county offices. Using these informal channels saves staff time and state and county resources, allowing everyone more time to resolve more issues.

**C. Collaborative and harmonious working relationships are fostered.**

OCRA staff continue to collaborate with the local regional centers, stakeholders, and community members. Examples of collaboration with regional centers include OCRA staff participating in:

- Self-Determination Program Local Advisory Committees
- Regional Center START Advisory Council
- Regional Center Diversity Committees

- Disparity Task Force Meetings
- ECT Review Committees
- Bioethics Committees
- Behavioral Modification Review Committees
- Risk Assessment Committees
- Regional Resource Development Project – Regional Center (RRDP-RC) Liaison Meetings

Some examples of collaboration with stakeholder and community groups include OCRA staff participating in:

- Access Paratransit Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Access Paratransit Operations Subcommittee
- Adult Transition Task Force
- Colaboracion Latina – UC Davis MIND Institute Resource Center
- County Coordinating Councils
- County/Advocate meetings about benefits, services, and appeals
- Criminal Justice Task Force
- Disability Thrive Initiative Advisory Group
- DS Taskforce and Implementation Workgroups (and many other DDS Focus Groups and Workgroups)
- El Arc de California
- Healthcare Task Force
- Health & Wellness Committee-Forensic Task Force
- IHSS Statewide Advocates' Meetings
- LA County Dependency Court Education Committee
- Multi-Agency Advisory Board (MAAB)
- People with Disabilities and Aging Advisory Council (PWDAAC)
- Self-Advocacy Board of Los Angeles County (SABLAC)
- SABLAC & SCDD Self-Advocacy Joint Projects
- SCDD Self-Advocacy Training
- SCDD Self-Advocacy Friendly check in
- SSI Statewide Advocates' Meetings
- State Hearings Division Stakeholder meetings
- Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (SSAN)
- Supported Life Training Planning Committees
- The Arc of California planning committees
- University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)
- Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee L.A County (VAAC)

Many OCRA staff provide training to regional center staff and vendors on topics such as clients' rights, OCRA services, or a substantive area of the law such as Social Security benefits. OCRA staff meet regularly with regional center staff and community partners to spot trends, share experiences and knowledge, and collaborate on many subjects. During this review period, meetings have continued virtually and in person. Many regional center staff have made OCRA their primary contact if their clients have legal issues.

OCRA has found, consistent with the contract requirement, that some of the most effective advocacy takes place because of interpersonal relationships and informal advocacy. OCRA's calls come from many sources. Staff have maintained the ability to resolve matters informally, and word of these successful negotiations often spread around the disability community.

### **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 these regional centers: North Los Angeles, Frank D. Lanterman, San Andreas, Far Northern, and Harbor. OCRA has forwarded copies of all MOUs to DDS. The status of each revised MOU is listed in Exhibit F.

### **D. Meeting with Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA)**

ARCA and OCRA met during this fiscal year, including discussions of legislative and state budget issues. ARCA and OCRA also serve on workgroups, task forces, and committees together, including the Deaf Services Steering Committee, Developmental Services Task Force and associated workgroups, State Alliance Team on Bridging Disability and Aging Networks, and Self Determination Program Advisory Group.

### **E. Clients and families are satisfied with the services provided.**

Disability Rights California recognizes the importance of client satisfaction. OCRA is committed to serving clients and family members in a way and with results that ensure client and family satisfaction with the services provided. In the past, OCRA used a Client Satisfaction Survey, developed

with DDS many years ago. Survey results showed positive client satisfaction during each review period. OCRA is revising the way we gauge client satisfaction and outcomes. OCRA did not send the former survey to any clients during this review period. Although not using a formal survey, OCRA sees positive results for clients through the variety of legal issues shown in the statistics and Advocacy Report. When their case ended, OCRA clients report high satisfaction with OCRA services to staff and community members. Satisfied clients give OCRA contact information to others who call for the first time. Another indicator of client satisfaction is the low number of grievances compared to the number of cases OCRA handles. During this review period, there were just 10 level one grievances, and none escalated to a higher level. Compared to 9,023 cases handled, this low number of grievances is remarkable. Cases are handled in a timely manner. Clients and families usually contact OCRA because something has gone wrong. They are losing government benefits, losing 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 in the intake record if a client has a deadline or a timeline 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 supervisors regularly review their staffs' open cases to make sure they are moving along timely. The management team monitors whether cases have been closed past the ideal time for best practice, and if there are any concerns, follow up with staff to go over the importance of handling cases promptly.

**F. The provision of clients' rights advocacy services is coordinated in consultation with the DDS Project Representative, stakeholder organizations, and persons with developmental disabilities and their families representing California's multicultural diversity.**

OCRA meets with the DDS contract manager during the fiscal year to review information about OCRA services in the Annual and Semi-Annual Reports. When DDS has asked to see specific data, OCRA responds by adding it to the next report.

DRC's Board of Director's Community Engagement Committee gathers input from the multicultural disability community, including people with developmental disabilities, about DRC and OCRA services. The OCRA Director and staff have served on several stakeholder committees about the appeals hearing process and conservatorship reform during this review period. During these sessions, OCRA listens and learns the developmental disability community's priorities. Several OCRA staff serve on Diversity Committees with their local regional center to find ways to better serve diverse client groups.

The OCRA Director also held listening sessions with OCRA staff to hear ideas on how to provide better services to clients. Staff ideas come from working directly with consumers and family members to hear what is important to them. Direct work includes direct case work and outreach events. Because listening has been so informative, OCRA will continue to hear from the community on how to provide high quality, efficient services with which clients are satisfied.

**G. Self-advocacy training is provided for clients 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 clients of regional center services provide at least two self-advocacy trainings for clients. 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 clients per year, which exceeds the two mandated trainings. Many offices provide more than one training per year. This fiscal year, OCRA conducted 27 self-advocacy trainings, compared to 18 the previous year. This is a 50 percent increase, and consistent with the larger number of in-person trainings completed over the last year.

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 below. Almost without exception, consumers are pleased with OCRA trainings. A list of Self-Advocacy Trainings held last year is in Exhibit G.

Survey comments from "Hands Off My Money."

5. How did this training meet your needs?

Information pertaining to persons w/disabilities

5. How did this training meet your needs?

"Information pertaining to persons w/disabilities."

████████████████████ super kind  
Bo & Aida were ~~appro~~ approachable

5. How did this training meet your needs?

Learned about Rights

6. How would you rate the quality of the presentation?

Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent  Fantastic

"Bo & Aida were super kind approachable"

5. How did this training meet your needs?

"Learned about Rights"

6. How would you rate the quality of the presentation?

Excellent Fantastic

4. Was the speaker interesting? YES NO

Comments: ☺ ☹️ (smile) Thank you!!

5. How did this training meet your needs?

The training was informative in all areas of money management & protection

4. Was the speaker interesting? YES

Comments: "(smile) Thank you!!"

5. How did this training meet your needs?

"The training was informative in all areas of money management & protection."

5. How did this training meet your needs?

learning to spend money

5. How did this training meet your needs?

"Learning to spend money"



YES ☺ NO ☹️

Comments: Both trainers were friendly.

YES

Comments: "Both trainers were friendly."

Survey comments from "Clients' Rights Bingo."



4. Was the speaker interesting?

YES  


NO  


Comments: Interactive & fun

4. Was the speaker interesting?

YES

Comments: "Interactive & fun"

5. How did this training meet your needs?

Explained services plainly & easy to understand.

5. How did this training meet your needs?

"Explained services plainly and easy to understand."

3. Did you learn something from this training?

YES  


NO  


Comments: I learned different things

3. Did you learn something from this training?

Comments: "I learned different things."

4. Was the speaker interesting?

YES  


NO  


Comments: Kept presentation interesting & fun.

4. Was the speaker interesting?

Comments: "Kept presentation interesting and fun." (YES)

### **III. TITLE 17 COMPLAINTS**

CCR, Title 17, Section 50540, sets forth a complaint procedure whereby a regional center client, 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. There were no Title 17 Complaints filed during the last fiscal year, as noted on Exhibit H.

### **IV. DENIAL OF CLIENTS' RIGHTS**

CCR, Title 17, Section 50530, says a care provider may deny one of the basic rights of a regional center client, if there is good cause. Good cause means the client's actions are dangerous to themselves or others, or there is risk of property destruction. The Clients' Rights Advocate must receive and review 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. Exhibit I is the current log of Denials of Rights the OCRA offices received.

OCRA also presented many well-received trainings on clients' rights and the denial process to new and existing residential service providers. For example, OCRA trains existing providers and also new providers quarterly through many regional centers' orientation programs.

### **V. CLIENT GRIEVANCES**

The contract 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. When declining to provide a requested service, OCRA staff offer the grievance procedure in all letters to clients or others who contact OCRA.

During the past fiscal year, OCRA handled 9,023 matters. Regional center clients or family members filed 10 first-level grievances, 0 second-level grievances, and 0 third-level grievances. Exhibit J is a chart detailing the grievances filed against OCRA during this period.

## **VI. COLLECTION OF ATTORNEY'S FEES**

OCRA does not charge clients, their families, or advocates fees or costs for services. 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 like those collected by private attorneys or advocates for special education cases or other cases where there are statutory attorney's fees. In the past, OCRA collected fees in some special education cases or Writs of Mandamus. Fees and costs may be negotiated at mediation, or an Administrative Law Judge can award them if 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 client or OCRA, such as expert evaluations. Neither Disability Rights California nor OCRA ever collect attorney's fees from clients.

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

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES**

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

The support of DDS through the years has made it possible for OCRA to serve clients effectively and efficiently. 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.

As this contract cycle was concluding, DRC and DDS negotiated a one-year amendment to the contract, which included funding for 6 additional positions designed to improve responsiveness. DRC appreciates this dedication of resources, as some high caseload offices require more than 2 advocates to meet community need. At the time of drafting this report, hiring is underway for additional bilingual advocates for OCRA's offices serving clients of the San Diego and North Bay regional centers. Two other positions will be for the Intake Assistants answering phone calls to busy offices, described above. This project has improved client satisfaction, as callers have said they appreciate when someone answers the phone and they do not have to leave a message. We also look forward to hiring 2 new

staff to support OCRA's Director and management team who oversee all the work.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

OCRA provides exceptional service to many people with developmental disabilities throughout the state. OCRA staff are pleased to perform more of this important work, including advocacy work and outreach events, in person again. 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.