

**Advocacy Report
January 2019 - June 2019**

All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

BENEFITS – IHSS

Increase in IHSS Hours Helps Harry to Remain Living with Family.

Harry recently moved in with his family. The move was overwhelming for everyone. Harry needed care and supervision. Harry's sister applied for IHSS for him, but he was only authorized 160 hours per month. She strongly believed he needed more hours of care. OCRA assisted Harry and his sister to appeal and request additional hours. As a result, he was awarded 283 hours per month of IHSS. This increase will help to ensure Harry can be cared for safely and remain living with his family.

OCRA Helps Clear Timesheet Violation So IHSS Won't Be Interrupted.

James' foster father, who is also his IHSS provider, called OCRA when he received a timesheet violation. James' IHSS hours were in jeopardy since he did not have another provider. After reviewing the notice from IHSS and the timesheets, it was evident that James' provider did not commit a timesheet violation. OCRA submitted an appeal to the California Department of Social Services and an advocate inquiry to the county social services department. The county sent a notice rescinding the timesheet violation charge for James' IHSS provider.

IHSS Application Date Corrected After OCRA Intervenes.

Susana's mother called OCRA for help getting IHSS benefits. She was struggling to start the IHSS application process on her own, since she speaks Spanish and the IHSS phone system in Spanish is hard to use. OCRA called with Susana's Spanish speaking mother to apply. IHSS mailed medical certification forms to the family in English. Since Susana's mother does not read English, she did not know the form needed to be completed by a doctor. IHSS rejected the form and asked for it to be completed by a doctor. OCRA and the regional center helped Susana's mother get the form completed by a doctor and submitted to IHSS. OCRA asked for an extension to the 45-day deadline because the form was not provided in the family's native language. IHSS denied the extension and said the family needed to start Susana's IHSS application all over again.

OCRA filed an appeal on Susana's behalf and explained that IHSS must provide forms translated into all languages spoken by a substantial number of the public served by the IHSS program. OCRA also pointed out that IHSS regulations allow for the county to extend the timeline for medical certification forms to be submitted on a case-by-case basis. After the appeal was filed, OCRA successfully negotiated with the county appeals specialist to backdate the IHSS application to when Susana's mother first applied. OCRA staff also represented Susana at her IHSS home assessment. Susana was granted IHSS eligibility and received a retroactive payment back to the date she initially applied.

OCRA Successfully Represents John to Get Protective Supervision.

John has autism, traumatic brain injury, and Tourette's Syndrome. He had been receiving IHSS protective supervision since he was a teenager. But every few years the county sends John and his family a notice proposing to reduce John's hours from around 218 per month to 18 or fewer per month. When IHSS tried to reduce John's hours in 2019, his mother, who is also his IHSS provider, contacted OCRA. His regional center service coordinator also contacted OCRA. Although his mother and service coordinator waited until the hearing date was almost upon them to contact OCRA, OCRA still assembled enough documents and exhibits to represent John. After negotiations with the county, John not only kept his IHSS protective supervision hours, but received an increase in his overall IHSS hours.

BENEFITS – CAPI

Client Gets CAPI Benefits After OCRA Appeals the Denial.

After attending an employee training about CAPI benefits, OCRA staff noted that one of their clients, Ana, might qualify for CAPI. Ana is a U-Visa applicant with an I-797 Notice of Action, which is an official letter of approval that can serve as proof for certain immigration benefits. OCRA provided technical assistance to Ana's ILS worker to help start the CAPI benefits application. OCRA gathered documentation of Ana's disabilities through the regional center and researched an All County Letter that allows eligibility for CAPI benefits with the I-797 Notice of Action. Ana's ILS worker submitted this information to the county. The county worker verbally denied Ana's eligibility, but Ana did not receive a written denial. OCRA filed an appeal on Ana's behalf and argued there was good cause

for the “late” filing, because Ana never received the written denial. Ana’s appeal was accepted and OCRA negotiated with the county to show she should qualify for CAPI benefits because of her disabilities, the I-797 Notice of Action, and the All County Letter. Ana was found eligible for CAPI benefits back to her application date and received retroactive payments. With her retroactive benefits, Ana plans to find her own apartment.

BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL

Heidi Gets Continued Medi-Cal Benefits During Appeal Process.

Heidi receives SSI benefits and depends on Medi-Cal to fund medical supplies to meet her needs each month. Without Medi-Cal funding, she can’t pay for the supplies. Heidi received a 30-day Notice of Action to terminate her Medi-Cal. She appealed the notice the same day and requested continued benefits as aid paid pending the appeal process. Heidi received a letter from the state hearings office, stating they received her appeal, and she would receive aid paid pending the appeal process. Within a week, Heidi received a letter from the county Medi-Cal office, stating they were terminating her Medi-Cal the following week and she would not receive aid paid pending. Heidi contacted OCRA because she did not know how she would pay for her medical supplies. OCRA contacted the state hearings office which gave contact information for the county appeals office to discuss the issue with the county’s Appeal Representative assigned to Heidi’s case. Heidi decided she would call. The county said it would honor her aid paid pending. Heidi also resolved the termination itself, so she will keep her Medi-Cal benefits.

Jerry Obtains No Share of Cost Medi-Cal.

63-year-old Jerry received Disabled Adult Child (DAC) Social Security benefits, Medi-Cal, and IHSS. His IHSS hours allow him to live comfortably in his home with his family. Jerry’s mother was his IHSS provider but she had to retire. Fortunately, Jerry’s brother Tom agreed to become his new IHSS provider. Around this time, Jerry’s Medi-Cal changed to share-of-cost Medi-Cal. This meant Jerry would need to pay part of his Medi-Cal expenses each month before Medi-Cal would pay for anything, including IHSS. Tom started to receive smaller checks from IHSS because Jerry had to pay his share of cost for IHSS directly to Tom. OCRA evaluated Jerry’s case and learned that Jerry was incorrectly placed into Medi-Cal with a share of cost. Because Jerry received DAC benefits, he should also have

DAC Medi-Cal with no share of cost. OCRA contacted Medi-Cal on Jerry's behalf and asked that Jerry be redetermined into the correct Medi-Cal program. OCRA escalated the issue to a supervisor, who finally reassessed Jerry's Medi-Cal eligibility to a no share-of-cost program. Being placed into the wrong Medi-Cal program and having a share of cost could prevent beneficiaries from receiving the IHSS care they need to stay in their homes. It was important to correct the error, verify that Jerry is eligible for Medi-Cal with no share of cost, and remind county workers they need to verify no share-of-cost eligibility for DAC recipients.

BENEFITS – MEDICARE

David Gets the Prescription He Needs.

David requires a specific medication to treat his epilepsy. David cannot take the generic brand for this specific medication because it causes him to have seizures. David came to OCRA when Medicare notified him that it would not cover his specific medication because generic brands are available. OCRA assisted David in appealing the Medicare decision. OCRA contacted David's doctor and requested a letter specifying that David requires the medication and cannot use the generic brand. Medicare received David's appeal and approved his request.

BENEFITS – SSDI

OCRA Helps Doug Recover \$11,228 From Social Security.

Doug's regional center service coordinator contacted OCRA for help after receiving a notice that Doug owed a \$9,156 Social Security Disability Insurance overpayment. The overpayment happened after Social Security said Doug was earning too much money from employment and stopped issuing him his monthly benefit checks. OCRA spoke to Doug's employer and requested they submit a form to Social Security which would document that Doug is receiving a subsidy where they pay him the same amount as an employee without a disability, but get less productivity. OCRA also asked Social Security to reopen its original decision to consider the subsidy. OCRA also asked the regional center to provide Doug with a job coach to help make sure something like this did not happen again. Social Security concluded they made a mistake and issued Doug a check for \$11,228 to reimburse him for the benefits he missed when they stopped his

monthly benefits. The regional center agreed to provide Doug with a job coach to help him with his employment and related benefits.

OCRA Helps Corrine Get Her Social Security Disability Benefits Back.

Corrine was referred to OCRA after her Social Security Disability Insurance benefits were terminated due to earning too much money. OCRA staff gathered documents and contacted her supervisor at work. OCRA then requested the Social Security Administration reopen her case after determining she had a work subsidy that was not applied towards her earnings. Because of this, her countable earnings were reduced by the subsidy her employer provides, which means her disability did not end and her benefits can start again. Corrine is now receiving her Social Security benefits and got a lump sum payment of over \$13,000.

BENEFITS – SSI

OCRA Helps Jolly Resolve a \$60,000 Overpayment.

Jolly contacted OCRA after his wages were garnished by Social Security to recover an overpayment. Jolly had already challenged that overpayment at an administrative hearing where he was represented by the regional center, but they lost and did not appeal. Jolly contacted OCRA when his wages were already being garnished. After reviewing many documents, OCRA learned that the regional center, Jolly's representative payee, was at fault in causing the overpayment because it did not report his wages to Social Security. OCRA negotiated with the regional center to pay back the large debt to Social Security so Jolly's wages would no longer be garnished. The regional center agreed to pay Social Security over \$35,000. Social Security accepted this amount as payment in full and stopped garnishing Jolly's wages.

Emerlinda's SSI is Reinstated.

Emerlinda is a young adult with mild intellectual disability. She was approved for SSI after she turned 18, but was terminated after a re-evaluation. Emerlinda's mother appealed and requested aid paid pending, which meant she will still get her benefits while waiting for the hearing. This limited their options in finding private counsel to assist them in their appeal, since there would be no attorney's fees coming out of a retroactive benefit award. Emerlinda's regional center service coordinator referred her to OCRA. OCRA agreed to help Emerlinda and her family prepare for a

meeting at the Social Security office. OCRA explained the listing criteria for intellectual disability and gave extensive advice on how to articulate Emerlinda's limitations and why she cannot do substantial work. OCRA reviewed records with the family and identified only one new report from the previous re-evaluation. Parts of the report were not helpful. OCRA explained that it was important to provide the hearing examiner with more context about the information in the report. After meeting with OCRA, Emerlinda and her family felt better prepared with a greater understanding of the disability criteria. Emerlinda's family confidently presented their information at the meeting and as a result, SSA determined Emerlinda to still be eligible for SSI. She will continue to work on her independent living skills and job skills without worrying about her finances. She hopes to work and not depend on SSI in the future.

EMPLOYMENT

Joe's Employer Pays Him Back Wages.

Joe is employed by an agency that vendors with the regional center. He worked in a unit that recycled electronics. Joe enjoyed this work because he likes taking things apart. There was always plenty of work, so he worked a full day. But, that unit closed, and Joe transferred to a different job in a new unit. Joe's new job was recycling glass, aluminum, and paper products. The employer provided transportation to and from the job and required Joe to be at the job site for a full day. However, this unit was much less busy and there was not always work for Joe to do. He still was being paid for his full day of work, since his employer requires him to be there the full day. When Joe got a new manager, suddenly his paycheck was drastically reduced. This was because his employer started only paying him for the times when customers were present at the recycling center. Joe and his parent both spoke to the employer, but their practices did not change. Joe did not think this was fair, so he called OCRA for help. OCRA worked with Joe's service coordinator, the community services division at the regional center, and his employer, to set up a team meeting. At the meeting, the employer agreed to reimburse Joe for all of the hours he had been on the job over the previous three months for which he had not been paid. The team also agreed that regional center would help Joe find a job more suited to his skills and strong work ethic.

HOUSING

Annie Gets Her Money Back.

Annie moved into a new apartment in September. Annie had provided notice to her former landlord of her plan to move. Unfortunately, Annie's financial management agency accidentally continued to send Annie's September and October rent checks to her former landlord. Despite Annie's repeated requests, the former landlord kept and cashed those rent checks. OCRA mailed a demand letter to Annie's former landlord stating that Annie had provided proper notice, moved out, and the landlord was not entitled to any rent payment beyond her rental period. The former landlord then returned Annie's money.

Javier Moves into His Own Apartment after Landlord Agrees to a Reasonable Accommodation.

Javier applied to rent an apartment, but the property owner refused to rent to him because he did not have an established credit history. This owner was also unwilling to rent to Javier, even if his mother agreed to be a cosigner on the lease. Javier's mother called OCRA. OCRA learned the building receives federal funding and must designate a certain number of units to individuals with disabilities who are low income. OCRA provided Javier's mother with legal authority regarding the property owner's obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to potential tenants with disabilities, such as permitting cosigners on a lease agreement. After sharing this information with the property owner, he approved Javier's rental application. Javier is thriving in his new home.

OCRA Negotiates with Housing Commission for Client.

Linda is in her 60s and uses a wheelchair for mobility due to cerebral palsy and arthritis. Linda requires 24/7 live-in aids to care for her. The aids use a Hoyer Lift to help Linda move in and out of her wheelchair and bed. Linda's aids must also turn her throughout the night or she may suffocate and die. For years, Linda has had a 2-bedroom voucher through Section 8 Housing as a reasonable accommodation so her aids can stay with her through the night. Recently, a supervisor at the local housing commission tried to revoke Linda's 2-bedroom housing voucher. When Linda turned to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities for help, she was told to call OCRA. OCRA contacted Linda's doctors and live-in aids, then filed a

request for reasonable accommodation with the local housing commission with details about Linda's health needs. The commission decided that Linda's 2-bedroom Section 8 housing voucher will continue as a reasonable accommodation. OCRA also advocated for a modification to her voucher, which means Linda now pays less in rent.

Monica Gets Safe, Appropriate Housing.

Monica lived independently in an apartment for most of her adult life. Over time, mold grew in her apartment, which had a major adverse impact on her health. Monica required hospitalization several times due to her compromised respiratory system. Monica asked her landlord repeatedly to clean out the mold. The landlord ignored her pleas. OCRA sent a demand letter ordering the landlord to find an alternative unit or compensate Monica so she could pay for another apartment. The landlord agreed to move Monica into a similar apartment unit until all the repairs are finished.

OCRA Helps Adam and Robert Obtain a Reasonable Accommodation.

Adam and Robert are twin brothers who each use a wheelchair. Adam and Robert did not have an accessible exit from their apartment complex to the sidewalk because tenants were allowed to park their cars in front of the building's exit. OCRA called the property manager and cited state and federal laws that required the property manager to have an accessible exit for Adam and Robert. OCRA successfully ensured that the property manager would create an accessible exit for the brothers.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

OCRA Makes Inroads with Students at English Express in Eureka.

The room bustled with conversation. The students, after their long days at work, caring for children, and handling the challenges of the day, settled into their seats, eager to speak Spanish and perfect their English. In March 2019 at the Jefferson Community Center in Eureka, 20 students of English Express gathered to learn more about the work of regional centers and OCRA. The Clients' Rights Advocate started her presentation with a scenario in which she described a child with a disability, who was struggling to remain in school. Helped by a student translator, OCRA asked the students to imagine and brainstorm what challenges the child would face in school and at home. Once the students' interests were piqued, OCRA began the presentation explaining the function of the regional center

system, as well as OCRA's role to serve and protect the rights of all clients of the regional center. The enthusiastic response of the class, and requests to know where OCRA's Eureka office was located, were wonderful signs of a budding relationship between OCRA and the students of English Express.

OCRA Assists Families in Ventura County at an Intake Clinic.

OCRA, in collaboration with the Tri-Counties Regional Center Rainbow Family Resource Center, provided an Intake Clinic to persons served in Ventura County. The Clients' Rights Advocate, Assistant Advocate, and supervisor conducted intake appointments scheduled for every 30 minutes in Spanish and English. 20 people obtained direct legal assistance, information, and referrals in response to their specific questions.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Mariah's Choices Prevail Over Family Wishes.

Mariah's family contacted OCRA for help obtaining a restrictive placement and the ability to make medical decisions for Mariah. Her family wanted her to live in a locked facility and make all decisions about the baby she carried. OCRA visited Mariah in the hospital where she was being treated for some medical issues. Mariah communicated that she does not want her family making her placement or medical decisions. She wanted to live in the community and carry her baby to term. Mariah, who is not conserved, needed OCRA to advocate for her choices because the hospital, looking toward discharge, wanted to accommodate the family's request for a locked placement. Some staff deferred to Mariah's family's wishes, whereas others supported Mariah, especially after OCRA's involvement. OCRA visited Mariah and communicated with the regional center and hospital staff. Mariah moved to a home in her preferred location and is now able to make her own decisions about her pregnancy.

Jesus Gets his Phone Back.

Jesus advocated for himself by talking with his day program staff, after his residential care provider took his personal cell phone from him. The day program staff told the regional center and OCRA, who met with Jesus to learn about his life and his home. During a visit at Jesus' home, the team learned that Jesus didn't have a light in his bedroom, needed a bed frame, and was doing laundry at a laundromat when there were laundry services

at the home. OCRA and the regional center worked with the family home provider and insured all of Jesus' needs were met. The provider received training in supporting Jesus rather than "parenting" him. Jesus was thankful for the help and visit from OCRA and the regional center. He continues to live in his home and have his cell phone, while enjoying the relationship with his family home provider.

REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Peer Advocacy Guides Client Along the Long Road to Placement.

Arthur has lived in an institution for many years. His troubling behaviors were a barrier to community placement. OCRA reviewed his annual comprehensive assessments and determined he needed advocacy to develop IPP goals and services better suited to his individual needs. Besides representing him at his IPP meetings to get an independent review of his medications and an updated behavior plan, OCRA also provided Arthur with ongoing 1:1 peer advocacy training. Arthur's behaviors included property destruction, borrowing, lending or trading, intimidation of staff, and threats to run away. During the first meetings with OCRA's Peer Advocate, Arthur would get upset about negative feedback from the institution staff. The Peer Advocate encouraged Arthur to focus on himself and only what he can control. Through calls every other week, Arthur and the Peer Advocate discussed how Arthur's behaviors affect his potential placement in the community. The Peer Advocate helped Arthur identify positive elements in his life that could help him improve his behaviors, such as more frequent communication with his mother and a change in medications. Arthur has made tremendous progress since the first meeting with OCRA. Arthur is more independent and motivated. He is improving his behaviors around cigarettes and money. He maintains positive relationships with his peers and shows respect toward female staff and his girlfriend. He achieved a higher "status" at his facility and has not engaged in any property destruction. He attends a day program and works in the community shredding, delivering confidential files, and recycling. His IPP team recommended Arthur for community placement. Peer advocacy support helped Arthur realize that he really could return to community living.

Jim Enjoys His First Month in His New Home.

For the last 20 years, Jim has lived in an institution. Jim worked hard to stabilize his behavior and find a treatment that helped him manage his mental health disability in his first few years in the institution. Jim has not found placement despite staff advocacy and assurances that Jim is an excellent client. OCRA stepped in to help, and after several placement options fell through, finally one moved forward. Jim moved into the community with his best friend from the institution. Both Jim and his friend are Deaf, and their new home has staff knowledgeable in ASL and an interpreter who is teaching new staff to communicate with Jim. Jim is now active in the Deaf community in his area and enjoys going to events such as bowling, dinner, and basketball games. Not only is Jim finding independence, his new staff report a burgeoning romance between him and someone in his Deaf community program. After 20 years, Jim finally has the independence he worked so hard to find.

Leroy Finally Gets Regional Center Services and Supports After Jail.

Leroy's attorney contacted OCRA for help because his regional center was not responding to requests for services. Leroy was in jail, charged with violating a restraining order to stay away from his family. His attorney explained Leroy's limitations on processing and retaining information, and his family noted he could not read nor write. Leroy was never referred to the regional center until his attorney became involved. He became eligible for regional center services at age 35. OCRA assisted Leroy's attorney to obtain regional center services and supports for a diversion plan for Leroy. The court granted the diversion plan. Leroy has a difficult time accepting his disability and acknowledging he needs support. Unfortunately, his family did not understand his disability and could not help him. As a result, Leroy tries to hide that he has a disability. OCRA is working with Leroy to acknowledge his strengths and understand his weaknesses to ask for help. OCRA continues to work with Leroy's team to ensure regional center promptly implements services.

Ashley Finds Successful Community Placement.

While at a locked facility, Ashley and her mother contacted OCRA for help finding placement in the community. OCRA agreed to represent Ashley, and attended her Transition Planning Meeting. At the meeting, her interdisciplinary team decided she could live in her own apartment in the

community. Upon discharge, Ashley moved into a studio apartment where she has 2:1 staff supervision. OCRA attended Ashley's 30-day IPP meeting in person where Ashley expressed that she likes her home, is getting along with her supported living services staff, and wants to go to school and the gym. OCRA has been working closely with the regional center service coordinator and the local school district to ensure that Ashley can access supports and services.

Michael Finds Placement at a Residential Treatment Program.

Michael is a teenager who had been placed in a locked psychiatric hospital since January 2017. Although Michael's behavior improved greatly at the hospital, Michael's regional center had not located a placement for him. He had been on the waiting list for a nearby residential treatment program, but it had a notoriously long waiting list. Michael had little family involvement, but had a passionate CASA advocate. OCRA contacted his CASA advocate and informed her that because Michael had been ready for discharge for some time, his placement at the hospital was no longer therapeutic. OCRA provided advocacy support during Michael's stay at the hospital. Michael was ultimately accepted at the residential program. He now has a home where he attends school full-time and plays on the basketball team.

Hospital Stabilization Leads to Madge Finding a Home.

For 3 months, Madge was transferred back and forth between hospitals for various medical and mental health care needs. Her insurance company wanted her to remain at their medical hospital, but she was transferred to a psychiatric hospital when her mental health symptoms increased. Madge would be transferred back to her insurance company's preferred hospital once her mental health stabilized. This cycle was traumatizing. Madge would improve temporarily, until the cycle started all over again. She could not remain stable long enough for her regional center to find community placement. OCRA got involved to help Madge find a community home. OCRA attended a meeting with staff from both hospitals to explain why Madge should remain in a healthcare setting that could provide both mental health and medical care. Madge's care team agreed to maintain treatment at an interdisciplinary hospital until a community placement could be found. A week later, Madge was accepted into a residential facility for individuals with complex medical needs.

REGIONAL CENTER – ELIGIBILITY

OCRA Helps Client Obtain Regional Center Eligibility.

43-year-old Pam was living in a car, unemployed, and had no medical insurance. After being awarded SSI, she learned she may be eligible for regional center services. Pam's father and stepmother asked OCRA for help applying for regional center services. OCRA met with Pam and spoke with her family members in another state. Pam and her family answered various questions to supplement the regional center's requests for information to support Pam's application. Pam grew up in a military family, so it was difficult putting together records and a complete picture for the regional center of what life was like for Pam before age 18. The law for regional center eligibility requires a person's developmental or intellectual disability to have existed before age 18. OCRA accompanied Pam to her in-person interview with the regional center's evaluator because Pam is easily intimidated when asked multiple questions. The regional center eventually found Pam eligible for services and she moved into a group home for women. Pam now receives SSI, Medi-Cal, and regional center services. Pam is also thinking about taking classes at her local college in the fall.

REGIONAL CENTER - SERVICES

David Recovers Deductibles of \$2,000 for ABA Services.

David received ABA services from a vendor of the regional center. David used his private insurance for the ABA, so was billed \$2,000.00 in deductibles. David's service coordinator told his mother that the regional center would pay for the deductibles for services provided in 2019 because those services are listed in David's 2018 IPP, but not for services provided before that time. David's mother filed a request for hearing to appeal the denial and filed a Welfare and Institutions Code section 4731 complaint because the regional center knew David needed and received the services from the start, but failed to include it in earlier IPP documents. OCRA provided David's mother with an opinion letter explaining the regional center's duty to fund the deductibles under the Lanterman Act. After reviewing OCRA's opinion letter, the regional center agreed to settle and funded the deductibles retroactively, which totaled \$2,000.

Frank Gets a New Beginning and a Better Home.

OCRA met Frank when he was living in a Supported Living Services home. Frank has cerebral palsy and requires help with his activities of daily living such as eating, caring for himself, and going to the bathroom. Frank also uses an assistive technology to communicate with others. When OCRA met Frank's roommates, the advocates noticed that his communication device was unplugged. Frank uses this device to communicate with the staff about his needs. With Frank's permission, OCRA asked the staff to plug in the device, but the staff did not know how to use it. OCRA also learned that the staff puts diapers on Frank, even though Frank can tell staff when he needs to use the bathroom, if he has his communication device. The staff also used a baby bottle when giving Frank some water. In addition, OCRA discovered that the staff only feeds Frank cereal and rice. Frank weighed 64 pounds when OCRA met him. OCRA filed an abuse report and contacted the regional center to investigate and take immediate action to address Frank's living situation. The regional center contacted the provider and planned appropriate supports for Frank. The regional center also tried to find a more appropriate place for him to live. Frank moved to an Intermediate Care Facility with nursing support to better meet his needs. For his first dinner at his new home, Frank had chicken carbonara and ice cream for dessert. In addition, the staff at his new home are now trained to use Frank's communication device. Frank will also get a new communication device.

Rose Gets to Make New Friends.

Rose is a 63-year-old woman who moved in with her sister and transferred to a new regional center. Rose loves to make new friends and do crafts, so she wanted to be in a day program. Helped by her sister, they requested a new day program. Although her referral packet was submitted to many day programs, the regional center did not provide Rose with a list of programs to view. Instead, the regional center was waiting on committee meetings to approve day programs for consumers, and these meetings were happening weeks between requests for services. Rose wanted to start her day program soon since she spent most of her time at home watching TV. Rose is very social and loves to be around people, so she was not happy being at home. OCRA guided Rose's sister on how to make a formal request to the regional center so timelines could be triggered. Once she had information on consumer rights, Rose's sister advocated on behalf of Rose. The regional center provided Rose with a wonderful day program

that focuses on art. Rose loves her new day program and has made great friends there.

Edgar's Respite Hours Dramatically Increase.

Edgar lives with his sister and her husband. Edgar was not getting the support and services he requires. Edgar's sister went five times to the regional center to speak to Edgar's service coordinator because the regional center terminated his 40 hours of respite. Unfortunately, Edgar's sister was not successful. Edgar's sister was very frustrated at the lack of support and assistance from the regional center. She went to OCRA's office and asked for assistance. OCRA and Edgar's sister spoke with his service coordinator and scheduled an IPP meeting. OCRA requested the regional center's Associate Director to attend in order have someone who can make decisions. At the IPP meeting, OCRA advocated for additional respite hours. The meeting was a success. The regional center saw Edgar's needs and agreed to increase the respite hours to 200 hours per month.

Jeff Gets Transportation to Therapy Paid by the Regional Center.

Jeff is an adult with cerebral palsy who uses a mechanical wheelchair to get around. He has experienced great emotional hardships throughout his life and many episodes of depression. Jeff has overcome a lot and currently lives independently with supported living services. He has worked with several therapists to cope with his feelings and work through hard times. His most recent therapist is in one county, but Jeff lives in another. Jeff enjoys his therapist, who has helped him through his most recent emotional struggles. Jeff's supported living staff were transporting him to his therapy sessions until the company van was totaled in a car accident. Jeff asked the regional center to continue funding for his transportation. The regional center agreed to pay for private transportation for 3 months until Jeff could find a therapist within the county so he can use paratransit services. Jeff struggled with this plan because it's hard to build a rapport with another therapist. The thought of having to recount some of his most traumatic life experiences during an initial intake caused him great distress. Jeff and his father appealed the regional center's decision and request funding until the next IPP meeting. Jeff's father called OCRA for help. OCRA helped Jeff's father prepare for the hearing by developing a case theory, discussing possible objections to evidence, and developing a plan of action for negotiating a settlement before the hearing. OCRA and Jeff's

father were in constant communication leading up to the hearing. The case settled right before the hearing when the regional center agreed to continue funding private transportation to Jeff's therapist.

Regional Center Funds Physical and Occupational Therapy for Luke.

Luke's mother contacted OCRA because California Children's Services determined that he was not eligible for physical and occupational therapy at their Medical Therapy Unit. Because of OCRA's involvement, the regional center agreed to fund physical and occupational therapy while Luke's mother pursued funding for therapies through Medi-Cal. Several regional center vendors are scheduled to evaluate Luke and recommend the number of hours he may need to meet his needs.

Lorena and Leticia Keep their Sister as Respite Provider.

Lorena and Leticia are 26-year-old twins that don't speak verbally, but primarily communicate through limited eye contact. The twins' family members learned to communicate with them and anticipate their needs over the years. However, people outside the family report not being able to communicate with Lorena and Leticia. After a nursing assessment was completed, the regional center decided that respite care should only be provided by a nurse, based on them having occasional seizures, and one of them having a prescription for Diastat. This would mean that the twins' older sister could no longer be the respite provider. The twins' parents believed that respite provided by family members was the only option because a nurse would not be able to communicate with them. Lorena and Leticia's parents requested a hearing to appeal the regional center's decision. OCRA provided Lorena and Leticia's parents with a publication about regional center respite hearings along with a sample letter for them to request records. Their parents provided OCRA copies of medical records to evaluate. OCRA advised Lorena and Leticia's parents to get a letter from their doctor that addressed whether they required a nurse to provide respite care. OCRA provided Lorena and Leticia's doctor a letter explaining the issues the doctor should address in his opinion. The doctor wrote a letter supporting that Lorena and Leticia's sister is qualified to care for them and administer medication. With the technical assistance of OCRA, their parents attended the hearing and received a favorable decision. The regional center system also benefited by providing respite that was both appropriate and cost-effective.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Theodore Goes Back to School.

Theodore has Down syndrome and sometimes does not know how to express himself positively. After a few behavior issues at school, he was informally expelled. Theodore's school district did not find another classroom for him to attend, so he went without any educational services for 5 months. OCRA filed for expedited due process to get Theodore quickly back into school. The school district found a new classroom for Theodore with the right behavior supports to address his needs. His family also received funding to compensate for his lost services.

Nancy Receives a Plan for her Care at School.

Nancy's mother had been trying to obtain an assessment of Nancy's needs and for the school to recognize Nancy's need for 2 people to lift and transfer her while at school. She requested an assessment and a 2-person lift/transfer as part of Nancy's IEP before contacting OCRA, but the district denied her requests. OCRA directly represented Nancy at a meeting with Nancy's school. The goal was to get an assessment plan in place. Based on OCRA's direct representation, Nancy obtained a plan for a 2-person lift/transfer written in Nancy's IEP. The district also agreed to send Nancy's mother a special circumstance instructional aide assessment plan for review and signature. Nancy will finally receive the assessments and services she needs.

Dominic Gets a School Aide.

Dominic was in a general education classroom. He frequently engaged in disruptive behaviors. The teacher had never worked with children with disabilities before. She would send Dominic out of the classroom several times every day. OCRA attended an IEP meeting with Dominic and his grandmother. The IEP team agreed to assign a 1:1 aide for Dominic. The team also reviewed the behavior intervention plan and agreed it is inappropriate for the teacher to send Dominic out of the classroom when he is being disruptive. The teacher now has other strategies to use when working with Dominic.