



Disability  
Rights  
California

**California's protection & advocacy system**  
Serving Consumers of Valley Mountain Regional Center

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Katie Hornberger, Director

FROM: Jazmin Romero, Outreach Coordinator South  
Paula Sandoval, Outreach Coordinator South  
Christine Hager, Outreach Coordinator North

RE: Annual OCRA Outreach Report July 2017 – June 2018

DATE: August 14, 2018

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OCRA staff began a new target outreach plan this year. These plans cover a two year period and are developed by reviewing census data, regional center data including purchase of service data, and OCRA service data. Staff review the data and select an underserved community to target their outreach to. The first year of the plan is spent developing contacts in this new community. This commitment to networking and building relationships with new target communities results in a decrease in the number of outreach trainings and participants in attendance at these trainings. However, once those relationships are established we expect an increase.

During the 2017-2018 fiscal year, OCRA presented 502 outreach presentations reaching approximately 15,258 consumers, families, service providers, and community members. This is a 9.7% decrease in the number of trainings from the previous outreach year and a 14% decrease in the number of people attending presentations. This decrease is typical given the new outreach training plan year, 2017-2019 and the new target communities identified. OCRA's enhanced commitment to educating communities, achieving long lasting relationships of trust and developing mutual connections with the people

we serve by providing trainings will contribute to an increase in outreach trainings and participants in the 2018-2019 outreach year.

### **Self-Advocacy Trainings**

Each OCRA office has a goal to provide at least one self-advocacy outreach presentation per year. The purpose of self-advocacy outreach is to educate and empower consumers about their individual rights in areas such as fair hearings, emergency preparedness, clients' rights, voting rights, money management, and community living options. The Department of Developmental Services approved a new community living options training this year. We are using that training with people living in locked facilities. OCRA has maintained a commitment to self-advocacy with a staff peer-advocate available to collaborate with OCRA staff and assist with outreach for all 21 OCRA offices. During this outreach plan year, OCRA provided 63 self-advocacy presentations. Below are two descriptions of self-advocacy presentations provided by OCRA.

### **An Afternoon of Bingo Fun for Residents of an Acute Crisis Unit.**

In March 2018, OCRA's Clients' Rights Advocates for Community Integration conducted a self-advocacy training for residents and staff members of an Acute Crisis Unit at a developmental center. Each participant received bingo cards with photos of different basic rights. Before the game started, people were asked to guess what right each picture represented. As the game continued, attendees picked cards and learned about the right depicted on each of the cards, such as the right to marry, the right to receive mail, the right to spend their own money, the right to have access to education and work, and the right to be out in the community. The staff also joined in on the fun by participating and assisting attendees in placing bingo chips on their cards. The unit's clients and staff who won Bingo were treated to prizes of chocolates, OCRA tote bags, and OCRA cups. In fact, clients filled their Bingo cards so often that staff had to assist them with bringing all their prizes back to their rooms. Attendees and staff reported they enjoyed the Bingo game and learning more about their rights and OCRA services.

### **Competitive Spirit Runs High During Bingo Competition!**

It was a bright and sunny day in May 2018 as Clients' Rights Advocates from OCRA's Community Integration Team met with residents and staff at a Daly City community group home. All the residents in the home had recently transitioned from developmental centers or other restrictive settings and were now enjoying new freedoms and responsibilities they had not had before. The residents and

staff were eager to learn about their personal rights and obligations, such as the right to personal possessions, visitors, unopened mail, confidential calls, and clothing of their choice. OCRA encouraged an open discussion on how every legal right carries a corresponding responsibility to exercise that right in a responsible manner. The mood was upbeat initially but as the Bingo game progressed, the residents got quite competitive in an effort to win one of the many fun OCRA gifts that were available. In the end, everyone went home a winner after learning about their rights and getting prizes. The residents and staff enjoyed the activity so much that they asked OCRA to return soon for another self-advocacy training topic.

### **Statewide Outreach Presentations (General Outreach)**

General outreach included 273 outreach presentations, an 84.45% increase from the previous outreach year. General outreach provided to the Regional Center community can be introductory or substantive, which enables us to establish a network of referral sources and contributes to the development and maintenance of our community contacts. OCRA offices have seen an increase in requests for staff and vendor trainings from the Regional Centers, which has contributed to our growth in General outreach. Below are five examples of general outreach:

### **OCRA Tackles the Tough Intersection Between Clients' Rights and Treatment Needs.**

In January 2018, OCRA Supervising Clients' Rights Advocate Tim Poe and Clients' Rights Advocate Jennifer Alfaro presented to a group of fifteen behavior specialists on "What is OCRA?" and "Clients Rights & Good Cause Denials." Attendees included professionals responsible for creating behavior plans for people with developmental disabilities. One psychologist in attendance provides oversight for an Enhanced Behavioral Supports Home that was struggling between the balance of clients' rights and treatment needs using a behavior plan. There was a lively discussion about the difficulty of navigating through clients' rights when a client has significant behaviors, for example when a client's personal property is withheld and used as an incentive.

OCRA reassured the professionals that balancing clients' rights with significant behaviors is difficult. Together, OCRA and the attendees explored the legal and practical considerations for when and under what conditions a denial of rights can occur. In the end, everyone walked away with a better understanding of the need to explore all less restrictive interventions before resorting to a denial of rights. After the training, a professional emailed OCRA an article from the

Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis on “Balancing the Right to Habilitation with the Right to Personal Liberties: The Rights of People with Developmental Disabilities to Eat Too Many Doughnuts and Take a Nap.” The professionals understood that people with developmental disabilities have rights that cannot legally be denied without strict scrutiny and a finding of good cause for the denial. OCRA looks forward to continuing to work with this group of professionals to protect clients’ rights.

### **Long Beach Public Defenders Partner with OCRA – and Get MCLE Credits, Too!**

After a long and tedious case working alongside OCRA, one Long Beach deputy public defender decided her colleagues also needed to know about the help OCRA can provide. Together, OCRA’s Cristina Kinsella and this public defender scheduled a lunchtime MCLE training that drew a crowd hungry for resources, knowledge, and lunch! Though the presentation was riveting, the Long Beach Public Defenders had a plethora of questions, and used the time after the training to brainstorm the future of OCRA’s relationship with their office.

OCRA Director Katie Hornberger, Clients’ Rights Advocate Cristina Kinsella, and Assistant Clients’ Rights Advocate Amy Moreno, kicked off a series of public defender trainings across California with this Long Beach Bring Your Own Lunch MCLE. They distributed publications full of valuable information, which the public defenders appreciated. Katie, Cristina, and Amy stayed after the training to answer questions before the public defenders ran back to court. Many public defenders stopped by to simply say, “Thank you for letting us know you’re here” and promised to call with questions. True to their word, public defenders from across California have started reaching out to OCRA with questions about how best to serve their regional center clients and ensure their right to services and placement in the least restrictive environment is upheld.

### **Tulare County Public Defenders Get a Helping Hand.**

Approximately 30 public defenders crowded into a small conference room in their Visalia courthouse office to learn how OCRA could partner with them to help regional center consumers. These public defenders are primarily responsible for representing clients at Porterville Developmental Center, and were not aware that a nonprofit existed to help them make sure their clients avoid unfair incarceration. OCRA was happy to help and provide the information they needed.



Photo: CRA Cristina Kinsella presenting to Tulare public defenders in Visalia

OCRA's Cristina Kinsella, Clients' Rights Advocate, and Eva Casas-Sarmiento, Supervising Clients' Rights Advocate, gladly answered all the Tulare Public Defenders' enthusiastic questions. Cristina and Eva stayed after the training to talk individually with public defenders who lingered with questions. Even though it was late on a Friday afternoon, these public defenders stayed to learn more about how OCRA could help their clients. Since the training, OCRA has received many phone calls from the Tulare Public Defenders' office. This training added to a growing list of successful presentations to public defenders across California, allowing OCRA to expand its work with regional center clients in jails and restrictive settings!

### **OCRA Collaboration Extends to Northern California Public Defenders in Solano County.**

In February 2018, a group of advocates from the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) met with the Solano County Public Defenders' Office to pave a path for collaboration to represent North Bay Regional Center (NBRC) consumers. Clients' Rights Advocate for Community Integration, Cherri Alcantara, organized a training for Solano county public defenders to learn about OCRA, regional center eligibility, and the right to live in the least restrictive environment.



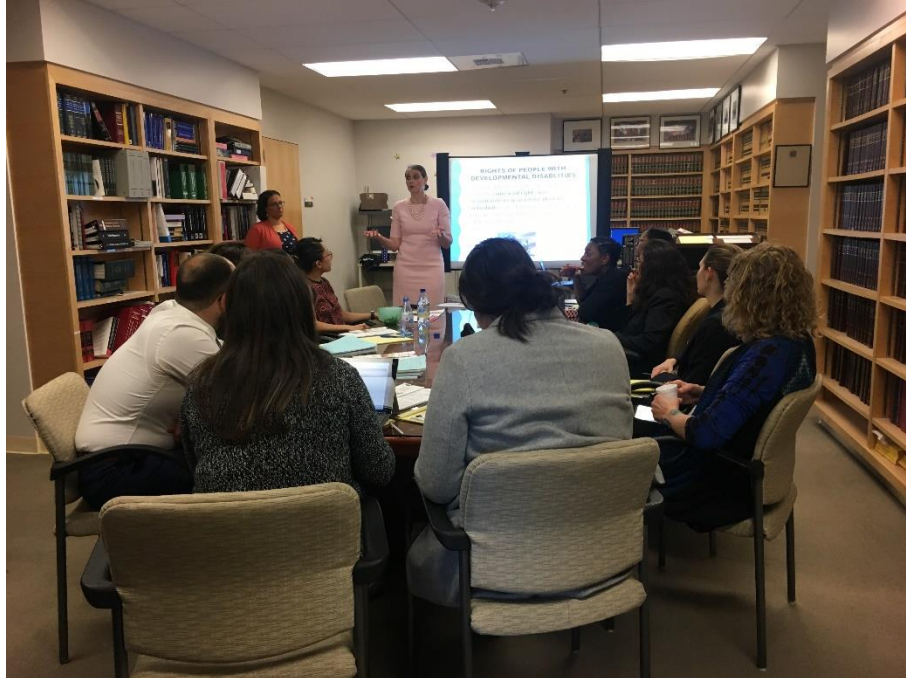


Photo: Katie Hornberger presenting to Solano county public defenders

The public defenders were interested in learning more about how they can assist their clients to receive more services through the regional center system. OCRA Director Katie Hornberger and Clients' Rights Advocate Yulahlia Hernandez presented to a dedicated group of 20 public defenders. The public defenders' enthusiasm to learn about the regional center system was evident from the insightful questions they asked throughout the presentation. They were excited to gain more information regarding the new models of care in the community. OCRA and the Solano County Public Defenders' Office will certainly be a powerful force, partnered in defense of the rights of regional center consumers in Northern California.

### **OCRA Conducts a Series of Trainings on Competitive Integrated Employment.**

Throughout January, February, and March of 2018 the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) conducted trainings and outreaches on competitive integrated employment in San Diego and Imperial Counties. OCRA partnered with the State Council on Developmental Disabilities and the San Diego Regional Center on these events, which were conducted in English with Spanish translations.

Many in attendance were not aware of the services available to youth in special education transitioning from school to the community or the rights of youth and adults with developmental disabilities to competitive integrated employment. In 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) which amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to authorize funding for vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities with a focus on employment at or above the minimum wage, working with nondisabled peers to promote independent living of individuals with disabilities. Also in 2014, California's Departments of Rehabilitation, Education, and Developmental Services entered into a 5 year "Blue Print" to work collaboratively to support individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to become employed in integrated settings and earn competitive wages with benefits.

OCRA answered questions on the individualized planning process and services that youth and adults with developmental disabilities are entitled to under state and federal law to prepare them for and support them in competitive integrated employment. OCRA also explained how public benefits may change for youth and adults with disabilities when employed at competitive wages, but there are ways to minimize any impact. For instance, tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families can be created under the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014, known as ABLIE accounts.

OCRA distributed handouts in English and Spanish at each of these events on the topics covered. Attendees were extremely appreciative of the helpful information provided and indicated they would contact OCRA if they had problems accessing the supports and services outlined in OCRA's presentations.

### **Target Outreach**

OCRA directs target outreach toward underserved communities identified by each offices' outreach plan. Target outreach is expected to inform and educate people with developmental disabilities and their families about their rights and the availability of services from OCRA. These communities include: people in locked facilities, the Latino community, and the Asian community including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, Filipino and Polynesian; the African American community and Native American community. This year OCRA conducted 166 target outreach presentations.

OCRA has a Community Integration Team which focuses on serving people in restrictive settings. The need to serve this population is based on changes to

the law, the closure of the Developmental Centers, and the development of new models of care. This team provides trainings and advocacy to consumers, agencies and stakeholders working with this population.

Below are seven examples of target outreach presentations:

### **OCRA Attends Chinese New Year Celebration.**

On March 3, 2018, hundreds of people in the Fresno Chinese community gathered to celebrate their annual Chinese New Year event. This was a lively family-oriented event to celebrate Chinese culture and traditions. Food, music, traditional costumes, and a colorful parade were part of the day's entertainment. Lots of community service agencies and providers along with Disability Rights California and the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) hosted booths to introduce their services to the Chinese community. OCRA had the pleasure of meeting many families and providing general information and resources about legal services, public benefits, special education, and regional center services. Families enjoyed a beautiful outdoor day with all of the entertainment available and learned about resources in their community.





Photo: OCRA Staff at the information table.

### **Family Day at the North Land Village Apartments.**

It was a sunny day and the doors to the North Land Village community room were wide open. Dozens of children, ages 5-11, rushed inside, eager to enjoy the hotdogs and cupcakes. Their parents and family members followed close behind to see what festivities were in store for them during this quarter's "Family Day." Jessica Tellez, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate with OCRA, greeted the families enthusiastically. The majority of the attendees were refugees with limited English skills. They relied on their young children to translate the meaning of the OCRA table. One little girl asked if grape-flavored Tylenol could heal a disability like arthritis. Jessica gently explained to children and families what a disability is and how OCRA can help make sure people with disabilities receive the services and benefits they need. Many residents were thrilled to

discover free advocacy services for their loved ones. This Family Day was a great success!

### **Latino Families Obtain Advocacy Information at Napa Down Syndrome Awareness Luncheon.**

It was a day of celebration, community, and shared experiences at ParentsCAN's Down syndrome awareness event in Napa in March 2018. About 200 people gathered to learn about resources and celebrate International Down Syndrome Day. The event was bilingual in Spanish and attended by mostly Latino families. Yulahlia Hernandez and Annie Breuer from the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) provided information about advocacy resources at OCRA's resource booth. OCRA was one of many resources in attendance. Other booths included service providers for people with developmental disabilities such as North Bay Regional Center and Napa Valley Support Services.



Families gathered information from OCRA about In-Home Supportive Services, special education, and regional center services. A number of families visiting OCRA's booth shared experiences of advocating for their child who has Down syndrome. One mother shared how her daughter was denied access to the swimming portion of her physical education class at her junior high school because of her disabilities. She successfully advocated for her daughter to be fully included in physical education classes. Throughout the day, OCRA staff heard numerous stories like this, highlighting the

Photo: OCRA staff at the table  
resiliency of these families in

Napa that are connected to ParentsCAN, a family resource center dedicated to empowering families through parent led services for children with developmental disabilities.

After the resource fair, a lunch was provided for attendees by the conference sponsors. Speakers shared stories of how their lives have been influenced by Down syndrome. The event was a wonderful celebration of International Down Syndrome Day and showed the strong community of self-advocates and families in Napa.



Photo: Families eating lunch.

### **OCRA Participates in PUPA's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Education Conference.**

The self-established parent support group, Padres Unidos Por El Autismo (Parents United for Autism, or PUPA), held their Annual Education Conference in April 2018 in Long Beach. The Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) was one of many local organizations and vendors that hosted a booth and presented at the conference. Clients' Rights Advocate Sandy Farah and Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Vanessa Juarez hosted OCRA's booth at the event. Parents and families were buzzing to visit OCRA's booth. They were delighted to meet their new advocates and learn that both Sandy and Vanessa are bilingual in English and Spanish. Families picked up publications in English and Spanish about the IEP Process and 18 Tips for Getting Quality Special Education Services for Your Child. During the conference, Sandy presented "What is OCRA?" in Spanish to a crowded room of parents and families. After the presentation, attendees approached the OCRA booth with lots of questions. OCRA collected their contact information and scheduled telephonic appointments with them.



This event was a great introduction for students, consumers, parents, families, local organizations, to obtain empowering information on quality special education and effectively advocating at IEP meetings.

**“What is OCRA” Outreach Event for Autism Parent Support Group is a Success.**



Photo: ACRA Gloria Delgadillo-Martinez

On June 26, 2018, the Office of Clients’ Rights Advocacy serving Golden Gate Regional Center consumers gave an outreach training on “What is OCRA” in both English and Spanish at the Support for Families San Francisco office. Attendees learned about OCRA, the practice areas, and the services OCRA provides. CRA Karis Daggs and ACRA Gloria Delgadillo-Martinez explained how OCRA can assist parents in their quest to get adequate supports and services for their children. Although the training’s main focus was to provide an overview of OCRA, staff touched upon many topics of interest to the audience, including special education rights and Lanterman Act entitlements. Parents were eager to learn about how to request Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individual Program Plan (IPP) meetings. Participants engaged in a

lively discussion about many barriers families face when trying to advocate for their loved ones. OCRA explained how they can assist clients with some of these situations. When the event ended, families expressed how great it was to learn about the tools and the resources available to them.

### **OCRA Collaborates with the Special Resource Center at Compton College.**

The Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) attended Compton College's Special Resource Center (SRC) Advisory Committee meeting on Friday, May 11, 2018. The President of Compton College, Mr. Keith Curry, introduced the initiatives and programs put in place to help increase academic success for students. Mr. Curry brought awareness of the systemic barriers students are presented with when attempting to pursue higher education. He provided the demographic information of students, who are predominately Hispanic and African-American. He stressed the need to connect students with community resources.

The SRC outlined their collaborations with the South Central Los Angeles Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation, and Compton Unified School District. OCRA's Paula Sandoval, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate, presented, "What is OCRA?" to educate the members of the advisory committee about the free legal advocacy services available to students with developmental disabilities.

During more discussion, the SRC explained their various programs that guide students with disabilities on a pathway to graduation or transfer to a university. During the discussion, OCRA suggested there be a resource fair for incoming students with disabilities so they learn about community partners available to support their needs. OCRA agreed to provide future workshops on topics of interest to the students of SRC. OCRA and SRC plan to continue their collaboration to support students with developmental disabilities to reach their career goals of obtaining competitive integrated employment.

### **Parents Participate in Empowerment Education Program.**

Fiesta Educativa, Inc. organized an educational program for parents and caregivers of children with special needs. The empowerment program included four sessions focused on understanding and advocating effectively in the special education system. The final session included information on the regional center and other community resources. The sessions covered a 3-4 week period and were separated for beginners, intermediate and advanced learners.

The sessions were offered in English and Spanish to an underserved community in the San Gabriel Valley. The San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center and the Clients' Rights Advocate co-presented the final session topic on regional center and other related services. Participants built their knowledge over each session and developed a sense of empowerment. At the end of each session, each participant was presented with a certificate of completion.



Photo: Empowerment program participants

## **Conclusion**

It is exciting to see OCRA offices working towards their goals and collaborating with new communities. We look forward to building many new relationships within our target communities in the 2018-2019 outreach year.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist OCRA in the important work of outreach. Thank you for this opportunity.