

ADVOCACY REPORT

OFFICE OF CLIENTS' RIGHTS ADVOCACY

Winter 2011

BENEFITS

IN-HOME SUPPORT SERVICES (IHSS)

A.M. Obtains the Protective Supervision Needed to Live in His Home.

A.M. is a young adult who has autism. He is attending school and wants to remain in his own home but he requires 24-hour supervision. Although A.M. is not able to communicate or direct his activities, and had no safety awareness, the county social worker denied protective supervision under IHSS.

A.M.'s mother filed for hearing. The mother prepared for the hearing by gathering documentary evidence of A.M.'s disability and his need for supervision at all times. She attended the hearing and brought the regional center social worker to testify. Unfortunately, the County did not come prepared. The county social worker never showed up and the county appeals specialist did not know enough about A.M.'s file to put on a case.

Instead of making a decision on the evidence, the judge ordered the County to reassess A.M. At the reassessment, the IHSS social worker asked the mother to obtain a full psychological evaluation. The County gave the mother a deadline in writing to get the evaluation. A.M.'s mother contacted the regional center, who agreed to complete a psychological evaluation. The County sent a new denial letter to A.M. before the deadline to complete the evaluation. A.M.'s mother called the IHSS worker and supervisor and left many messages. No calls were returned. A.M.'s mother then wrote a letter to the state hearings division (SHD) asking for a new hearing. Instead, the mother received a denial of her "rehearing request."

A.M.'s mother contacted OCRA for assistance. OCRA sent a request for an expedited hearing to the SHD and cited procedural violations and communication mishaps. The request was granted. OCRA presented evidence of A.M.'s disability, need for constant supervision, and testimony about how A.M. meets the criteria for protective supervision. OCRA received a favorable hearing decision shortly afterward with an award of a retroactive grant. Katie Meyer, CRA, Luisa Delgadillo, Assistant CRA, Westside Regional Center.

County Reinstates V.R.'s Maximum IHSS Hours.

V.R. received an IHSS notice of proposed action which attempted to reduce her 283 hours to 93.2 hours per month despite a recent hearing decision. OCRA agreed to assist V.R. by contacting the county appeals worker. During the telephone call to the appeals worker, OCRA was able to straighten out the County's confusion regarding the case. The County agreed that the notice was improper and reinstated V.R.'s 283 hours of IHSS services per month. Margaret Oppel, CRA, Matthew O'Neill, Temporary CRA, Gina Gheno, Assistant CRA, Tri-Counties Regional Center.

K.M. Obtains Personal and Related Hours.

K.M.'s mother requested assistance to prepare for K.M.'s IHSS needs assessment because the county social worker verbally informed her that K.M. would not be eligible for any IHSS services. K.M. is dependents on others for all of her daily living needs. The Assistant CRA provided the parent with publications, including the needs assessment chart, and explained how to document K.M.'s needs for the assessment. As recommended, K.M.'s mother filled out the chart and provided documentation at the assessment. K.M. was authorized 72 hours per month of IHSS. Jacqueline Miller, CRA, Cynthia Salomon, Assistant CRA, Regional Center of Orange County.

M.T. Secures Maximum IHSS Hours.

M.T. is a 17-year-old female with autism. She received an IHSS notice of action dated February 18, 2011, reducing 195 hours to 128. 20.5 hours were for protective supervision. The mother believed that M.T. was totally dependent on others in all self-care areas and that

the 195 hours meet her daughter's needs. The mother requested that OCRA help her prepare for hearing.

OCRA agreed to provide technical assistance and advised the mother about the IHSS program and appeal procedures. The mother settled prior to hearing by signing a conditional withdrawal granting 283 hours, starting June 1, 2011. Wendy Dumlao, CRA, Alba Gomez, Assistant CRA, San Diego Regional Center.

J.B.'s IHSS Hours Are Restored.

J.B. was authorized 283 hours of IHSS per month. The county social worker reduced the hours to 195 because she determined that someone other than the parent was providing some of the personal and related service hours. After consulting with OCRA, the parent appealed the reduction because the social worker had incorrectly estimated the hours that J.B.'s care was provided by another person and the social worker had not requested that the person sign the DSS form as a volunteer. In addition, despite a timely appeal, J.B. was denied aid paid pending. The CRA assisted the parent in preparing for hearing by utilizing the time for task chart to show that J.B. had unmet needs, and accurately showing the actual 20 hours that were provided by another person. With the CRA's assistance, J.B.'s parent was able to successfully negotiate with the county representative to restore J.B.'s hours to 283. Jacqueline Miller, CRA, Cynthia Salomon, Assistant CRA, Regional Center of Orange County.

One Year Battle to Receive IHSS Ends in Success.

K. L.'s mother had been struggling for about one year to get IHSS for K.L. K.L.'s mother was unsuccessful in getting a home assessment by an IHSS worker because the mother was continuously denied IHSS for her daughter over the phone. K.L.'s mother was told repeatedly by the IHSS representative that she was the mother and it was her responsibility to watch K.L. K.L.'s mother contacted OCRA for assistance. The CRA explained to K.L.'s mother the IHSS application and appeal process. K.L.'s mother was instructed to complete the IHSS self assessment packet. Once K.L.'s mother was prepared, she called IHSS and was again denied over the phone. This time K.L.'s mother requested a written denial. Within a week, K.L.

was visited at home by an IHSS worker. Recently K.L.'s mother received a notice from IHSS granting K.L. 35 hours of IHSS per month. Aimee Delgado, CRA, Marisol Cruz, Assistant CRA, San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center.

MEDI-CAL

K.A. and J.C. Retain Medi-Cal with No Share of Cost.

Two months after K.A. and J.C. were married, they received a Medi-Cal Notice of Action informing them that they had a \$1,088 per month share of cost because their income exceeded the allowable amount for the Aged and Disabled Program. K.A. and J.C.'s Medi-Cal social worker informed them that they were not eligible for any other Medi-Cal program that would reduce or eliminate their share of cost. The CRA worked with the regional center benefits specialist to obtain information about K.A. and J.C. to determine if they were eligible for a different Medi-Cal program. The records revealed that K.A. and J.C. were both recipients of Disabled Adult Child Social Security benefits (DAC). The CRA informed the clients that since they were recipients of DAC benefits, they were able to be married and eligible for Medi-Cal with no share of cost. With the permission of the clients, the CRA contacted the Medi-Cal office and advised it of its error, which it agreed to correct. Jacqueline Miller, CRA, Cynthia Salomon, Assistant CRA, Regional Center of Orange County.

SOCIAL SECURITY

OCRA Helps Get Social Security Benefits Reinstated.

W.W. was made eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) when the program started in 1974. W.W. missed an appointment for an evaluation in 2009. Due to W.W.'s failure to participate in the evaluation, his SSI was terminated. W.W.'s benefits were later reinstated and he was awarded retroactive payment in August, 2010. Without notice, W.W. stopped getting checks in November, 2010. Various service providers attempted to get W.W.'s benefits reinstated but to no avail. The providers sought the assistance of OCRA.

OCRA learned that two local offices were involved in W.W.'s case and that one of the offices had miscoded W.W.'s benefit status. The confusion was between the codes "expedited reinstatement" and "payment continuation." OCRA intervened and convinced the local Social Security Administration Office (SSA) of the correct code, which the SSA quickly entered into its computer system. Receipt of the SSI prevented W.W. from losing his trailer space and protected his credit rating. Jim Stoepler, CRA, Redwood Coast Regional Center, Ukiah.

Incorrect Decision Is Reversed and an Overpayment Is Waived.

S.M. is an adult client who had received SSI benefits for 27 of her 30 years of life. She had never been able to work. The SSA terminated her SSI benefits with no written notice. OCRA determined that the termination came about because the client's disability was being reviewed and the representative payee did not submit the documentation that the SSA requested. S.M. made the CRA her authorized representative. The CRA filed a request for reconsideration on the grounds that there had never been a determination about the disability and included proof of S.M.'s continuing disability.

OCRA's request was dismissed. The administrative law judge (ALJ) claimed he had tried to contact the representative payee to no avail, so he had to dismiss the claim. The ALJ had never tried to contact the CRA, who had been the authorized representative for 11 months, had filed for the hearing in the first place, and who had met with the SSA representatives several times.

OCRA filed an appeal with the Appeals Council. Meanwhile, S.M.'s benefits had been reinstated but she had a large overpayment from when she was found not disabled by SSA. Two years after filing, OCRA received a favorable decision from the Appeals Council. The Council ruled that the ALJ incorrectly dismissed the case. The case was remanded back to the local Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) for a hearing.

Recently, OCRA received a fully favorable decision made on the basis of the documents submitted. No hearing was held. The new

ODAR judge found that S.M. did meet the listings and that the original ALJ did not have any evidence to support his decision that S.M.'s condition had improved. S.M. is not responsible for any overpayment that resulted from the initial decision. Katie Meyer, CRA, Luisa Delgadillo, Assistant CRA, Westside Regional Center.

SSI Overpayment Waived following OCRA Intervention.

M.M. is 54 and works through a supported employment program. M.M. receives SSI benefits and his mother is his representative payee. M.M. and his mother work together to report M.M.'s wages to the SSA in a timely manner. Despite diligent efforts to report income, M.M. got a notice of overpayment in the amount of \$1,414.00.

M.M. and his mother requested OCRA assistance. They could not understand why the overpayment occurred. OCRA assisted M.M. with the completion and filing of a Request for Reconsideration. The SSA subsequently notified M.M. that he no longer owed the \$1,414.00. Katy Lusson, CRA, Trina Saldana, Assistant CRA, Golden Gate Regional Center.

SSA Corrects Error.

G.G. is a 38-years-old and has intellectual disabilities, Cornelia de Lange Syndrome, and a heart condition. G.G. requires significant personal support with feeding, bathing, and personal care needs. Her representative payee received a notice of action stating that G.G.'s monthly SSI amount would be reduced by \$241.00. OCRA assistance was requested.

OCRA reviewed the notice and explained to the representative payee that the SSA incorrectly changed G.G.'s living arrangement from the board and care rate when she moved to another address. OCRA advocated for G.G.'s representative payee to follow through with the SSA request to meet with G.G. and to complete the necessary paperwork to correct the problem. G.G. followed through with the meeting and completed the required forms. The SSA received the updated information from the county and reinstated G.G.'s SSI monies to the board and care rate. Leinani Walter, CRA, Christine Hager, Assistant CRA, Valley Mountain Regional Center.

CONSUMER DEBT

OCRA Gets Debt Cancelled and Tax Debt Discharged.

T.H. has a cognitive disability. He was talked into co-signing a car loan for his brother. T.H. did not understand that if his brother failed to make loan payments, he would be responsible for paying back the loan. T.H. could not afford the payments and came to OCRA for assistance.

In 2008, OCRA sent a letter to the lender and explained that because of his disability, T.H. did not possess the requisite capacity to enter into the car loan contract. OCRA requested that the debt be cancelled and it was.

Last year, T.H. received a notice from the IRS that he had a tax increase of \$1,533 from 2008, because the lender filed a 1099 form for \$9,894 because of the cancellation of the debt. T.H. again requested assistance from OCRA.

OCRA wrote a letter to the IRS and also filed forms 1040X and 982 for T.H. Last month, T.H. received a new notice from the IRS stating that he does not owe any additional taxes for 2008. Jackie Coleman, CRA, Alta California Regional Center.

SLS Agency Forgives Debt.

J.W. has lived in supported living for many years. She has support staff that live with her. J.W. received a notice that she could move from her present apartment to another apartment in the same building which would cost her less money. In order to do this, she had to break her lease. Her supported living provider assured her that they would help her with these costs and J.W. moved. Some time after this, the SLS provider asked J.W. to pay back the money it had spent to assist her with the move. J.W. disagreed with this and attempted to negotiate with the agency. She also requested OCRA assistance.

OCRA scheduled a meeting with the SLS provider, the regional center, and J.W. The director of the SLS agency agreed that she had

not been clear with J.W. The SLS agency agreed to forgive the debt. Katy Lusson, CRA, Trina Saldana, Assistant CRA, Golden Gate Regional Center.

Consumer Fraud Judgments Obtained For Multiple Consumers.

OCRA was contacted by a regional center service coordinator in July, 2010, regarding a consumer, D.R., who was encountering difficulties in getting a local furniture store to fulfill a contract for household furnishings. The furniture store was a vendor used by many consumers with the assistance of their service coordinator or group home staff.

Upon investigation, the CRA learned that there were several adversely affected consumers. In addition to D.R., D.S., K.T., and M.W. all had unfulfilled contracts with the same store. Requests for delivery of furniture or refund went unanswered.

The CRA wrote letters of inquiry on behalf of the consumers. That inquiry received no response. Demand letters were then sent seeking reimbursement, and putting the store on notice of intent to litigate. The store still failed to respond. The CRA next consulted with the regional center's trust department, as it was the representative payee for the consumers.

The regional center removed the store from the approved vendor list. The CRA provided technical assistance for the preparation and filing of small claims cases on behalf of each consumer, and the cases were filed by the regional center on the consumers' behalf. Judgments in the consumers' favor of \$804, \$1020, \$729, and \$1104, plus court costs of \$142.50 each, were obtained. Andy Holcombe, CRA, Lorie Atamian, Assistant CRA, Far Northern Regional Center.

EMPLOYMENT

Consumer Returns to Work Following Negotiated Agreement.

J.M. worked in supported employment for a large grocery store. Despite many interventions by his employment coach, J.M. lost his

temper and cursed at other employees and customers. The store wanted to terminate his employment. He had been on leave for several months when OCRA was contacted.

OCRA worked with involved parties at the store and with the regional center social worker. A beneficial agreement was negotiated which allowed J.M. to return to work. It was agreed that J.M. would receive counseling and additional support as needed. Katy Lusson, CRA, Trina Saldana, Assistant CRA, Golden Gate Regional Center.

HOUSING

C.B. Retains Larger Apartment and Rent Subsidy.

C.B. is a 28-year-old who lives independently and is the parent of a 3-year-old son. In November, 2010, C.B. received notices from the City Public Housing Authority (PHA) and contacted OCRA. The PHA proposed changes to C.B.'s Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), which is used to calculate the family share of rent, and a reduction to her existing Voucher Payment Standard (VPS), which is used to determine voucher bedroom size. The proposed change to her HAP would have increased C.B.'s rent payment to 80% of her monthly SSI income, making it unaffordable. The PHA also proposed that C.B. relocate to a smaller unit to achieve a more affordable rent. However, C.B. needed to remain in her current, larger apartment to meet her disability and equipment storage needs.

OCRA assisted C.B. and her supported living services (SLS) worker to complete necessary forms requesting a reasonable accommodation. OCRA requested a letter from C.B.'s regional center service coordinator as well as the SLS program director to detail C.B.'s disability and support for the accommodation requests. OCRA coordinated written documentation from C.B.'s treating physician regarding C.B.'s disability, limited mobility, and equipment usage (2 wheelchairs, stander and a walker). OCRA coordinated the submission of documents to the PHA. OCRA also initiated interim rental assistance with a local legal aid agency's rapid re-housing program and C.B. was approved.

The PHA approved both accommodation requests in February, 2011. C.B.'s rent was not increased and she and her son remain in their larger 3-bedroom apartment. Anastasia Bacigalupo, CRA, Christine Armand, Associate CRA, South Central Los Angeles Regional Center.

Interagency Collaboration Prevents Homelessness.

OCRA was contacted by staff from the county department of mental health regarding B.R. B.R. was being evicted and was expected to become homeless. She had applied for regional center eligibility and been found eligible but had not yet had an IPP meeting.

OCRA went to meet with B.R. She was living in an empty apartment and had no food. B.R.'s family had moved out of the apartment the previous week. They had promised to return to the apartment but never did. B.R. was alone.

OCRA requested an emergency IPP. The regional center agreed to an IPP meeting the following morning. At the IPP meeting, OCRA advocated for B.R. to receive emergency housing at a group home and emergency resources in the interim. B.R. moved into a group home within a few days and is now receiving appropriate shelter and food. Yulahlia Hernandez, CRA, Annie Breuer, Assistant CRA, North Bay Regional Center.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

S.W. Changes His Payee So He Can Be More Independent.

S.W. was referred to OCRA by his supported living agency. The agency was concerned that S.W.'s mother was misusing his SSI. It was also reported that the mother was not paying S.W.'s rent.

When OCRA spoke to S.W. about this situation, he informed OCRA that he had asked his mother to pay his rent and she refused. OCRA counseled S.W. on his options. S.W. was interested in becoming his own payee, so OCRA contacted the regional center. The regional center agreed to become S.W.'s payee. The regional center also

agreed to have S.W.'s supported living agency start working on budgeting with S.W., so that he can become his own payee.

OCRA sent all necessary paperwork to the regional center to change S.W.'s representative payee and also submitted a letter to the SSA on S.W.'s behalf. S.W.'s payee was changed to the regional center in March, 2011. Wendy Dumlao, CRA, Alba Gomez, Assistant CRA, San Diego Regional Center.

REGIONAL CENTER

Regional Center Fills the Gap When EPSDT Services End.

One month before D.L.'s 21st birthday, he received a notice of action letter from IHSS. The notice informed D.L. that his eligibility for 343 LVN nursing hours per month through EPSDT would end on his birthday. D.L. would then only be eligible to receive 35 LVN nursing hours per month in the home through the Nursing Facility/Acute Hospital Waiver Program. This change in nursing services would mean that D.L. would be at risk of being placed into a nursing facility instead of continuing to live at home with his parents. D.L. asked the regional center to fill the gap in nursing hours left when D.L. aged out of the EPSDT program. The regional center denied D.L.'s request stating that Medi-Cal was the generic resource responsible for providing the nursing services. The regional center requested that D.L. appeal the Medi-Cal decision in an effort to obtain more nursing hours. OCRA represented D.L. in a series of meetings with the regional center to negotiate a solution. One day prior to his birthday, D.L. was approved for 70 hours per week of LVN nursing hours paid for by the regional center while D.L. pursues his appeal against Medi-Cal. Eva Casas-Sarmiento, Interim CRA, Abigail Perez, Assistant CRA, Harbor Regional Center.

C.S. Moves into a Home of Her Choice.

C.S. lived in a nursing facility for over a year though she no longer required nursing level of care. C.S. had informed her prior conservator that she wanted to move to a more independent community setting. OCRA agreed to represent C.S. at her regional

center meeting. OCRA contacted the nursing facility staff and former conservator and reviewed all records to better determine what types of medical care or assistance C.S. might need in the community. At the regional center meeting, C.S. identified the types of settings in which she would like to live and the types of day activities she preferred. OCRA and regional center staff worked with C.S. to identify community settings that she could visit that would meet her needs and preferences. C.S. chose a placement in the community where she will have her own bedroom and bathroom and be around people her age with similar interests. C.S. will be moving to her new home in April and will be provided with personal assistant hours to help her with shopping, running errands and participating in other community activities. Timothy Poe, CRA, Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center.

Client Receives Needed Supports to Remain Safely at Home.

E.B. requested assistance from OCRA in securing additional services for him to remain safely in his home and increase his independence in the community. E.B.'s needs for additional supports in his home had changed given the advanced age of his elderly mother who had previously served as E.B.'s primary caregiver.

OCRA agreed to represent E.B. at his IPP meeting and recommended that the regional center fund a comprehensive assessment in order to better evaluate E.B.'s needs at home and in the community. The regional center agreed to fund the assessment and subsequently adopted the recommendations in the assessment, which include funding services in the home to assist E.B. with personal care needs and household chores. In addition, E.B. was approved to receive services in the community to allow him to engage in recreational activities. Ibrahim Saab, CRA, Ada Hamer, Assistant CRA, North Los Angeles County Regional Center.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

District Funds Functional Analysis Assessment and Assistive Technology Evaluation.

B.N., an elementary school student with autism and a significant hearing impairment, had not made meaningful progress in school for three years. B.N. had trouble staying on task and would have behavioral challenges throughout the school day. OCRA requested that the district conduct a functional analysis assessment (FAA) and an assistive technology (AT) evaluation. The FAA found that B.N. was acting out due to his inability to communicate his needs and preferences in the classroom. A behavior plan was developed and within weeks, the student met three out of four of his annual behavior goals.

The district funded an assessment which concluded that B.N. would benefit from many technology devices, including a word processor, to assist BN with staying on task. The district purchased all of these items for B.N. As a result, B.N.'s unwanted behaviors have decreased and he is now making significant progress on his IEP goals. Rita Defilippis, CRA, San Andreas Regional Center.

School District Agrees to All Proposed Resolutions in a Compliance Complaint.

X.M. is a 13-year-old student who was out of school for five months after his mother removed him from an inappropriate placement. During the second month that X.M. was out of school, the district responded to his mother's request for an IEP meeting. The district agreed to fund a number of in-home educational services until a new school placement could be found. The district did not, however, provide the interim services it had promised, and an additional three months passed before X.M.'s mother contacted OCRA.

OCRA wrote a Compliance Complaint for X.M.'s mother to submit to the California Department of Education (CDE), and instructed the mother to provide a copy of the complaint to the school district. Within 24 hours of the district's receipt of the complaint, the Special Education Director contacted X.M.'s mother and agreed to all of the

resolution terms that had been proposed in the complaint. In addition to compensatory services, the resolutions included the provision of 20 hours per week of individual instruction through a non-public agency starting immediately and continuing throughout the summer, and a comprehensive assessment by the California Diagnostic Center to be completed prior to the beginning of the next school year. Celeste Palmer, Associate CRA, Megan Chambers, CRA, Regional Center of the East Bay.

District Provides Student with Augmentative Communication Device.

M.G. needed a sophisticated eye-gaze controlled augmentative communication (AC) device to communicate effectively. His mother and sister, who are monolingual Spanish speakers, had tried to get M.G.'s school district to provide an appropriate device but the district insisted on having M.G. continue to use a switch-operated AC device that did not adequately allow M.G. to communicate his needs and choices, and which M.G. did not like to use.

OCRA attended multiple IEP meetings and persuaded the district to arrange trials of suitable devices so that M.G. could show that he was capable of using a more sophisticated system. Once M.G.'s capabilities were established, the district agreed to rent the appropriate device, but then did not. After continued negotiations, OCRA was successful in obtaining the district's commitment to purchase the device. Due to a number of subsequent delays in the district's fulfilling its commitment, OCRA found it necessary to file a Compliance Complaint with the Department of Education. As a result, the appropriate device was purchased, and M.G. is receiving training and support in its use from the district's AC specialist. Megan Chambers, CRA, Celeste Palmer, Associate CRA, Regional Center of the East Bay.

Parent Reimbursed for Tuition for Private School.

A.M., a student with autism and a significant anxiety disorder, had been on home instruction for three years because of his inability to remain composed in a district special education classroom. A.M.'s mother found a small private school which serves students with special needs, including students with disabilities such as A.M.s. The

district did not have a current contract with the private school. The parent contacted OCRA, who negotiated with the district for reimbursement of the tuition. The district agreed to reimburse the parent as the district did not have a placement to meet the student's needs. Rita Defilippis, CRA, San Andreas Regional Center.

Assistive Technology Secured.

S.G. is a child with autism. In school, S.G. had difficulty with reading and verbal communication. S.G.'s mother had requested Kurzweil assistive technology the previous year. Kurzweil is assistive technology that uses text-to-speech software. It provides complete reading, study skill and writing support for the student. The school responded to S.G.'s mother's request with an informal denial. The school told S.G.'s mother that it did not have that software.

S.G.'s mother contacted OCRA for advice on how to proceed. OCRA suggested that S.G.'s mother request an assistive technology assessment and an IEP to discuss S.G.'s need. OCRA agreed to attend the IEP. S.G.'s mother requested an assistive technology assessment in writing. The school approved S.G.'s use of this software and agreed to train staff on its use, without an assessment. Wendy Dumlao, CRA, Alba Gomez, Assistant CRA, San Diego Regional Center.

District Returns A.A. to His Original Placement.

A.A. is a student with autism who was suspended for behavior related to his disability. The district placed the student on home instruction indefinitely, without first holding a manifestation determination. The manifestation determination decides if a student's actions were a result of his or her disability. A.A.'s parents contacted OCRA, which represented the student at an IEP meeting. The district promptly returned A.A. to his original placement and agreed to fund an FAA to develop a positive behavior intervention plan. Rita Defilippis, CRA, San Andreas Regional Center.

S. B. Receives Assessments Tailored to Her Individual Need.

S.B. is a 5-year-old girl who is non-verbal. S.B.'s mother contacted OCRA for advocacy assistance after removing S.B. from school due to alleged abuse by her teacher. After advising S.B.'s mother on the alleged abuse issue, OCRA agreed to review records. OCRA found that the school district had failed to provide any related services to S.B. OCRA agreed to provide technical assistance to S.B.'s family in preparation for upcoming IEP meetings. In an attempt to obtain appropriate services for S.B., OCRA wrote a letter on S.B.'s behalf which requested that the school district conduct a psychological assessment using instruments designed for non-verbal children, a speech assessment, an occupational therapy assessment, an AT assessment, and an inclusion assessment to determine a placement in the least restrictive environment. S.B. is now in a new placement and the school district is in the process of completing all of the assessments requested by S.B.'s family. Veronica Cervantes, CRA, Matthew O'Neill, Temporary Assistant CRA, Inland Regional Center.

OCRA Convinces the School District to Fund a 1:1 Aide.

R.R. is a 16-year-old high school student who eloped from school and was found by police wandering the streets five miles from the high school campus. This was the second time in a year that R.R. had eloped without school officials knowing where he had gone. OCRA represented R.R. at an IEP meeting where the school agreed to fund a 1:1 aide for R.R. pending the outcome of a Special Circumstance Instructional Aide (SCIA) Assessment. OCRA represented R.R. at the follow-up IEP meeting where the IEP team discussed the SCIA results. The IEP team agreed it was necessary to continue funding the 1:1 aide.

The members of the IEP team also created a school wide color coordinated hall pass system that would not only be used for special education students but for all students on campus. The new pass system would be incorporated into school policy in order to prevent what happened to R.R. from happening to anyone else. Mario Espinoza, CRA, Kern Regional Center.

School District Agrees to Cancel SARB Hearing.

J.R. is a student with autism. He was getting sick a great deal, having significant challenges, and missing school. J.R.'s doctors were attempting to find the correct combination of medications in order to address J.R.'s behaviors. J.R.'s mother attempted to provide explanations to the school regarding a 2-month absence. Despite her efforts, the school district initiated a SARB hearing. OCRA was contacted for assistance.

OCRA spoke with J.R.'s physician and the special education director at J.R.'s school and assisted with the drafting of a letter to the school which outlined the medical basis for the behaviors and illness. Following review of the letter by the school district, it agreed to a period of home schooling while medication trials were initiated. Katy Lusson, CRA, Trina Saldana, Assistant CRA, Golden Gate Regional Center.

B.B. Is Provided with Behavioral Supports in the Classroom.

B.B.'s parent called OCRA for assistance in obtaining behavioral supports from the school district after receiving a phone call from the school that B.B. was being suspended. OCRA represented B.B. at an IEP meeting advocating for behavioral services to address B.B.'s disruptive behaviors. At the IEP meeting, the parent learned that for several weeks B.B. had been denied participation in weekly school community outings. Instead, B.B. was required to sit in the administrative offices with no structured educational services. OCRA also obtained information at the IEP meeting that different teachers were using different approaches to try to compel B.B. to behave. There was no consistent positive behavioral plan. OCRA convinced the IEP team to fund a comprehensive FAA. The school psychologist also agreed to train staff to implement positive behavioral interventions on a temporary basis until a more comprehensive behavioral plan was developed. B.B.'s behavioral incidents have decreased and she is again joining her classmates in community outings. OCRA will represent B.B. at a follow-up IEP at which time the assessment will be reviewed and a more comprehensive behavioral plan will be developed. Timothy Poe, CRA, Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center.

P.L. Obtains a Change In Classroom Placement and an Assistive Technology Assessment.

P.L.'s mother contacted OCRA regarding the many difficulties P.L. was having in his current classroom placement. The mother felt that P.L. was extremely unhappy in his classroom placement. When he arrived home from school each day he was angry and engaged in self-injurious behaviors. P.L.'s mother informed OCRA that she needed assistance in getting a change in classroom placement for P.L. OCRA reviewed P.L.'s records. It was apparent that P.L. was placed in an inappropriate classroom and that he did not have a way to communicate with his classmates and teachers.

OCRA attended two IEP meetings on P.L.'s behalf. During each meeting, OCRA presented reasons why a change in classroom placement was necessary. Additionally, OCRA requested an assistive technology assessment to be conducted to determine how to address P.L.'s communication needs. OCRA also discussed a more appropriate behavior plan as it was necessary to provide a different type of intervention strategy. As the result of OCRA's advocacy, the school district offered a change in classroom placement and to conduct an assistive technology assessment. Jackie S. Chiang, CRA, Lucy Garcia, Assistant CRA, Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center.

Outreach and Training

Residents at Sierra Vista Learn about Living Options.

On March 10 and 18, 2011, OCRA presented "My Own Choice" trainings to residents at Sierra Vista Rehabilitation Center in Highland. The residents learned about living options and making choices for their future. The training materials included a "My Own Choice" workbook, sticker booklet, and a DVD, all of which were developed by the Department of Developmental Services.

The residents were excited about discussing their preferences and enjoyed asking many questions. Staff worked individually with each resident. The residents hope to share their workbooks with friends,

family, and regional center service coordinators. Veronica Cervantes, CRA, Katie Hornberger, Supervising CRA, Inland Regional Center.