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California's protection and advocacy system

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jeanne Molineaux, Director

FROM: Kendra McWright, Outreach Coordinator, North
Beatriz Reyes, Outreach Coordinator, South

RE: Annual OCRA Outreach Report
June 2011 – June 2012

DATE: August 10, 2012

In an effort to respond to the growing demand for information, OCRA presents to consumers, their families, and other interested people, general, targeted, and self-advocacy trainings. Each of these areas is discussed individually in the sections below.

During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, OCRA presented more than 368 trainings to approximately 19,174 consumers and families. The number of individuals reached by OCRA outreach and training this fiscal year exceeds the previous year by more than 1,000 participants. This is a great accomplishment as OCRA has a strong commitment to inform the communities that we serve; an increase of this size shows the importance of outreach to the communities we serve.

Self-Advocacy Trainings

OCRA's contract with the Department of Developmental Services requires OCRA to perform at least two self-advocacy trainings per year. OCRA has set a standard for each of its offices to conduct at least one self-advocacy outreach presentation per year. Many of the offices have gone above the minimum requirements. During this period, OCRA presented

approximately 52 self-advocacy outreach presentations to individuals served by the regional center. These presentations focused on topics such as emergency preparedness, clients' rights, voting rights, money management, and community living options. Below is a description of a few of the presentations provided by OCRA:

Clients' Rights Bingo at Pioneer Valley High School: The special education teacher brought together 3 independent classrooms for a clients' rights training co-presented by OCRA and the DRC Peer Self-Advocacy Unit. A lively bingo game was presented with much active participation by students and teachers. By the end of the presentation, the students had a strong grasp of their rights and OCRA and the DRC Peer Self-Advocacy Unit were invited back to provide substantive legal training on transition planning.

Supported Living Training for Consumers and Vendors of San Andreas Regional Center: OCRA presented a training on supported living services for consumers and vendors. The presentation quickly took on a life of its own and the audience began sharing information and resources with each other. What a wonderful turn of events, for the attendees to become the trainers.

General Outreach Trainings

OCRA is required to conduct at least 160 outreach presentations per contract year. This year, OCRA has surpassed its goal by presenting over 368 trainings. As described above, these 368 presentations are divided into 3 categories, one of which is General Outreach. A description of a few of these presentations follows:

Vote in 2012: Held at the Ukiah Valley Association for Habilitation and Mayacama Industries, Jim Stoepler, of the Ukiah office of OCRA, presented on Voting Rights. Jim used the recent Ukiah Library Tax Election to show how every vote counted in an election to keep the local library open. This seemed to raise the interest on how and why to register to vote. Lots of good questions were raised about voting. A few participants registered to vote on the spot.

OCRA's Office Servicing Harbor Regional Center Consumers Holds Open House: OCRA held an open house to welcome new Clients' Rights

Advocate, Eva Casas-Sarmiento, and show its office location for consumers of Harbor Regional Center services. OCRA had snacks, a raffle, and lots of information for people to take home with them. The open house was attended by vendors, regional center staff, consumers, family members, and local agency representatives. Attendees not only learned about their rights and services but also about the specific services OCRA could provide. It was fun to watch people mingle and meet who might not otherwise connect, despite having a common bond.

Targeted Outreach Trainings

In an effort to stay true to its goals as an organization, OCRA works to connect with traditionally underserved communities. This year marked the start of a new two-year plan, thus each OCRA office compared its previous statistics of consumers served with similar statistics for the regional center served, for the purpose of choosing a targeted community. Once a targeted community is chosen, each office works to focus much of its outreach in that community. Examples below discuss two of these outreach presentations:

Exceptional Parents United Latino Support Group: OCRA collaborated with the regional office of DRC to give a Spanish- language training to a support group of parents and grandparents of children with developmental disabilities aged birth to 5-years old. OCRA explained how to obtain public benefits and how OCRA or the regional office staff could assist. We handed out "Beneficios Publicos Para Personas Con Discapacidades" (Public Benefits for People with Disabilities) and "Servicios de Apoyo En El Hogar, Aspectos Fundamentales" (IHSS Nuts & Bolts). We answered lots of questions about IHSS, SSI, regional center services, and special education. OCRA agreed to come back and do another training in the fall.

Ethiopian Parent Support Group: OCRA attended a meeting of the Ethiopian Parent Support Group at Westside Regional Center. Luisa Delgadillo gave a brief, What Is OCRA?, presentation and explained the types of services OCRA provides. Katie Meyer gave a basic overview of many programs that serve children with developmental disabilities. These included: Regional Center, In Home Supportive Services, Special Education, Social Security, and California Children's Services. The rest of the evening was spent answering questions about these programs. The parents learned a great deal and many have called for follow up advice.

Conclusion

As an organization, OCRA is proud to report the above statistics and report that it has surpassed all of its outreach goals. We look forward to the 2012-2013 outreach plan year.

Thank you for the opportunity to coordinate outreach presentations and trainings for OCRA.