

Advocacy Report

January 2024 - June 2024

All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

BENEFITS – IHSS

Sarah Wins Her IHSS Hearing.

Sarah is a 16-year-old who lives with her parents and siblings. Sarah and her family are monolingual Spanish speakers. Sarah has been getting IHSS hours since 2017. In May 2023, Sarah had her annual re-evaluation. Sarah's mother asked for protective supervision and more hours in other areas for Sarah because of her significant needs. The county denied her request. OCRA filed an appeal on Sarah's behalf and represented her at the hearing. After the hearing, the judge awarded Sarah 195 hours monthly for protective supervision and more hours for feeding, ambulation, and transferring. The judge also ordered her IHSS funding program to be changed to the Community First Choice Option program, so Sarah would get the most hours. Sarah and her family received over \$25,000 in back pay and are set up for success.

Seth's IHSS is Reinstated.

11-year-old Seth lives with his father and siblings. Seth's father contacted OCRA because although Seth receives IHSS protective supervision hours, his father could not access those hours. Instead, Seth's non-custodial parent was fraudulently claiming Seth's IHSS hours. When Seth's father contacted the IHSS fraud department, he did not get a response. OCRA contacted the IHSS fraud department and found out that Seth's IHSS case had been terminated months before due to lack of response from Seth's family. OCRA verified with IHSS the phone numbers on file for Seth's family and found out that the phone numbers had been changed to the non-custodial parent's number. IHSS opened a fraud case in response to OCRA's phone call. IHSS also agreed to contact Seth's father (the custodial parent) and reinstate Seth's IHSS hours based on the alleged fraud. Seth now has IHSS hours again and his father is paid to provide those services.

Eli Gets 225 Hours of IHSS With Protective Supervision and Back-pay.

Eli is 5 years old. His mother called OCRA because she needed help making sure he remained safe at home. She applied for IHSS years ago, but the county denied the application. After hearing about Eli's intense needs, OCRA advised Eli's mother to prepare evidence to reapply. Eli's mother followed OCRA's advice by keeping a diary of Eli's needs, completing a hazard injury log, and getting documents from the doctor. OCRA reviewed the documents and advised Eli's mother to reapply. IHSS reviewed the evidence and granted Eli 225 IHSS hours with protective supervision. Eli also got back-pay of over \$4,500.

John's IHSS Gets Reinstated.

John's mother called OCRA when the county reduced his IHSS hours by 151 each month after a re-evaluation. She needed help because the county sent letters with conflicting information. One letter said IHSS would reduce John's hours, while another said his hours would stay the same. OCRA helped John's mother call the county Appeals Specialist. Despite these efforts, the county provided no clarification on the status of John's hours. With a hearing scheduled the next day, OCRA advised John's mother on how to communicate the issues to the judge about the county's lack of notice and the confusion caused by the letters. After the hearing, the judge ordered the county to reinstate all 151 hours and evaluate John for protective supervision hours.

BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL

A \$1.00 Problem Turns Out to Be Much Larger.

Mark had no share-of-cost Medi-Cal and needed dental work done over many appointment days. Mark called OCRA for help because he had a fixed income, and his dentist required a \$1.00 copayment before every appointment. He asked if this is okay for the dentist to charge. OCRA's research found the law letting dentists charge patients like Mark was repealed a year ago in 2023. The research also uncovered larger issues with the Medi-Cal dental program. The 2024 Medi-Cal Dental Provider Handbook, the Member Handbook, and official websites still had outdated copayment information. The Medi-Cal dental hotline was still telling people

it was okay to charge \$1.00 copayments for each appointment. OCRA drafted an information sheet for Mark's dentist explaining that a change in the law banned Medi-Cal dental copayments. OCRA worked with other legal advocacy organizations to make the California Department of Health Care Services aware of the publication and advice errors and to ask for a Provider Bulletin saying Medi-Cal dental copayments are prohibited. The money Mark would have spent on many \$1.00 dental copayments can now be used to pay for other things he needs. And the larger issue being fixed means others will not pay co-pays that are no longer allowed.

Omar Gets his Medical Supplies.

Omar's mother called OCRA for help getting Omar diapers. Omar received the wrong sized diapers because of a mistake in his prescription. Omar's mother has been trying to solve the issue for months, but the health network Omar used, through Medi-Cal, would not respond to her. OCRA called the health network with Omar's mother. The representative took care of the issue and ordered the correct sizes for the pharmacy. Omar now has the medical supplies he needs.

Dara's Medi-Cal Share of Cost is Corrected and Expenses Will Be Reimbursed.

Dara lives independently in her own home with supported living services. She does not work and relies on Medi-Cal for her health insurance. Dara had full-scope, no share-of-cost Medi-Cal for many years. One day, she received a notice from Medi-Cal that she must pay a share of cost of \$1,400 a month. This means she would have to pay \$1,400 every month toward her medical costs before Medi-Cal would pay anything. This share of cost affected her In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), as she could not pay this amount every month to her caregivers before IHSS would kick in. Dara has a court-appointed conservator who contacted OCRA to help restore Dara's Medi-Cal. OCRA tried to resolve the issue with the county directly but had to file a request for a state fair hearing. OCRA explained Dara should have Disabled Adult Child Medi-Cal because she receives Disabled Adult Child Social Security benefits as she always has, and nothing had changed. OCRA agreed to a conditional withdrawal with the county appeals specialist so the county could put her

Medi-Cal back. Dara's Medi-Cal was corrected in the system with no share of cost going back several months. Dara, with the help of her supported living staff, will submit receipts for reimbursement to cover out-of-pocket expenses she incurred while she had the improper share of cost.

BENEFITS – SSDI

Social Security Reinstates Emily's SSDI Benefits.

Emily's mother contacted OCRA because SSA terminated Emily's SSDI benefits and said she had a \$32,690 overpayment. OCRA learned that Emily had been employed for years. OCRA then gathered information about her work subsidy, spoke with her employer, and gave information to Social Security about her work subsidy. A work subsidy is when an employer pays a person with a disability the same as a person without a disability but gets and expects less productivity. OCRA also filed an appeal for Emily, represented her at an informal conference, and asked Social Security to reinstate her benefits. Emily's SSDI benefits were reinstated back to the date they were terminated, and she does not have to pay back the large overpayment.

Lisa Gets Her Benefits Back and a \$15,391 Overpayment Removed.

Lisa and her mother contacted OCRA for help after Lisa received an overpayment notice of \$15,391 for SSDI. Social Security thought Lisa had earned too much money from her job. OCRA helped appeal the overpayment notice, gathered records, and spoke with Lisa's job coach. OCRA then submitted a brief and represented Lisa at the administrative hearing to challenge Social Security's decision that Lisa could no longer get SSDI and had been overpaid because of her wages. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge said Lisa had not been overpaid and ordered Social Security to stop asking Lisa to pay \$15,391. Lisa is still eligible for SSDI and can now focus on succeeding at work.

Social Security Appeals Council Sends Case Back for New Hearing.

Carlos contacted OCRA when he lost at his Social Security hearing. He received the hearing decision which denied him SSDI benefits. Carlos works for his Independent Living Skills provider, but Carlos does not get Independent Living Skills training while on the job. Instead, his employer

accommodates Carlos's disability and subsidizes his earnings. At the hearing, the Administrative Law Judge found no evidence of these accommodations or subsidies. OCRA appealed the decision to Social Security's Appeals Council. OCRA gathered evidence from Carlos's employer, including a Work Activity Questionnaire describing the accommodations and subsidy the employer provides to Carlos. The Appeals Council remanded the case back to the Administrative Law Judge ordering the judge to consider the evidence that OCRA submitted.

BENEFITS – SSI

Ramon Receives Retroactive SSI Benefits.

Ramon is a 12-year-old boy who lives at home with his monolingual Spanish speaking family. He was found eligible for SSI in January 2022 and was awarded over \$9,000 in retroactive benefits. To get that money, Ramon's parents had to open a "dedicated account." Social Security told them to do this, but then created many barriers for the family to access the money. Ramon's parents did everything Social Security asked, but the Social Security office staff could not explain why they could not access this money. OCRA represented Ramon and contacted the Regional Public Affairs Office telling them about the problem with the local office. The issue was resolved right away, and Ramon received part of his retroactive benefits the very next day. In six months, the family will receive the remaining retroactive benefits. They now have security, knowing they have enough money to meet Ramon's needs.

Norman Wins his Hearing and Gets His SSI Benefits Reinstated.

Norman received SSI benefits as a child. When he turned 18, Social Security reviewed his eligibility under the standard for adults. This is called an Age-18 Redetermination. These cases are important for OCRA to review because clients will often keep their benefits during their appeal, which means they will have no back-payment and no way to pay a private SSI attorney. Social Security denied Norman at the first and second levels of appeals. Norman asked for a hearing with an Administrative Law Judge. Norman requested that OCRA represent him at the hearing to show he meets the adult standard for disability. OCRA gathered, developed, and reviewed records, then submitted a written brief to the judge. OCRA also

helped prepare Norman to testify and provided moral support to encourage him to testify without his parents in the hearing room because the judge refused to allow them in to support him. Norman testified well about his disability and all the support he needed. After hearing the arguments and evidence, the judge decided that his disability met the adult standard. Norman is now receiving ongoing SSI benefits after age 18 and is focusing on independent living.

Alberto Gets \$6,800 Back in SSI Benefits.

Alberto's caregiver contacted OCRA because Social Security recovered about \$6,800 for an SSI overpayment from 5 years ago. The regional center had been Alberto's representative payee. OCRA agreed to investigate why Social Security took the money and asked for records from the regional center. OCRA's records review showed that the regional center let Alberto's account go over the resource limit. OCRA asked for a waiver of the overpayment, asking that Social Security order the regional center to pay Alberto back the money he paid to Social Security. Social Security never responded. OCRA made repeated requests to the regional center explaining why they were at fault for Alberto's overpayment and should pay him back. The regional center eventually agreed, and Alberto got his money back.

Lisa is Eligible for SSI Again.

Social Security terminated Lisa's benefits after she turned 18. OCRA explained Lisa's rights to benefits and helped her to understand what evidence to present to Social Security. With the new evidence, Social Security found Lisa eligible for SSI benefits again. Lisa's father said that with eligibility for SSI, Lisa can now pay for her own food and rent. After reviewing her notice, OCRA told Lisa that Social Security reduced her monthly SSI benefits amount for In-Kind Support and Maintenance. OCRA explained that Social Security reduced her monthly benefit by 1/3 because they believe someone else contributes to her food and shelter. OCRA told Lisa she can appeal and tell Social Security she does not receive help to pay for food and shelter. Lisa asked for the full SSI benefit amount back to the date of her eligibility decision.

William Wins at Hearing and Does Not Have to Pay Back \$2,145.

William's mother contacted OCRA because Social Security believed William was over the SSI resource limit for several months and was overpaid. The overpayment happened when William was a child. OCRA reviewed his parents' bank statements and created a spreadsheet that showed that William was not over the SSI resource limit during those months. OCRA helped William's mother, a monolingual Spanish speaker, ask for a hearing with a Social Security Administrative Law Judge. OCRA met with her many times to prepare her for the hearing. William's mother represented him at his hearing using the written evidence OCRA prepared. The judge gave William a fully favorable decision and found he was eligible for SSI benefits during these months. He does not have to pay back the overpayment of \$2,145.

HOUSING

Mary Gets Her Reasonable Accommodation.

Mary contacted OCRA for advocacy support because she faced a possible eviction from her home. Mary and her husband Ben had received noise complaints from their property manager. However, Mary and Ben both use electric wheelchairs and have 24-hour care because of their disabilities. Staff come to the home throughout the day and night to care for Mary and Ben. OCRA asked for a reasonable accommodation for the noise in the unit due to their staff and wheelchairs. The landlord approved the reasonable accommodation request. Mary is no longer facing eviction for noise complaints.

Betty Keeps Her Two-Bedroom Apartment.

Betty contacted OCRA for help with her two-bedroom, Section 8 housing voucher. After years of advocating to get herself out of a skilled nursing facility, Betty secured a housing voucher for a two-bedroom unit and moved into an independent living situation. Betty qualified for a two-bedroom voucher because she had a live-in caregiver. When Betty's caregiver could no longer provide live-in care, the Housing Authority told Betty she was not eligible for a two-bedroom voucher and would have to move to a one-bedroom unit. OCRA met with Betty at her apartment and saw how well it

met her needs. The apartment has lowered countertops and appliances, wide hallways, and a wheelchair accessible bathroom. Betty feared losing not only her apartment but also her independence. OCRA wrote a reasonable accommodation request on behalf of Betty to the Housing Authority explaining her need for the additional room to store her medical supplies, including her manual wheelchair, and the space to use her motorized wheelchair. After review, the Housing Authority granted Betty's reasonable accommodation request and let her stay in her two-bedroom apartment using her two-bedroom, Section 8 housing voucher.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

OCRA Helps Register Voters for Primary Election.

OCRA was invited to participate in a resource fair focused on transition-aged youth. The event was sponsored by the Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center. Associate Clients' Rights Advocate Ada Hamer and Peer Advocate Scott Barron staffed a table with important voting information including registration cards, publications from the League of Women Voters, and the California Easy Voter Guide. These publications are non-partisan and describe the propositions using plain language. Gabriel Taylor, Disability Rights California's Voting Rights Advocate, also joined Ada and Scott at this fun event held at the United Teachers Los Angeles building in the Koreatown neighborhood. During the March 2024 event, around 80 people visited the resource table and appreciated the information. The young adults were excited to learn how to exercise their right to vote.

Los Angeles County Representatives Learn About the Importance of Accessible Voting for People with Different Disabilities.

Since the presidential election is coming up soon, representatives from Los Angeles County's Mobile and Flex Voter Unit were interested in learning about the voting experiences of people with disabilities. OCRA's Peer Advocate Scott Barron and Disability Rights California's Senior Voting Rights Advocate Gabriel Taylor were invited to speak on their personal and professional experiences around the importance of making the voting process accessible to all people. Scott and Gabriel shared their experience

serving as OCRA and Disability Rights California representatives during the process of designing the Voting Systems for all People (VSAP). The VSAP was developed by the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk in 2009 to address an aging voting system and an increasingly large and complex electorate. Gabriel shared how much he enjoyed voting without needing help from a poll worker. Scott and Gabriel talked about making sure there are no barriers in the path of travel to reach the voting center like a slope in the sidewalk or a bad parking lot layout. Scott and Gabriel both talked about how curbside voting was a great way to make the voting process accessible to everyone. A county representative appreciated Scott's and Gabriel's willingness to answer questions about how to improve the voting process.

OCRA Educates Board-Certified Behavior Analysts on Clients' Rights.

Board-certified behavior analysts (BCBAs) play a key role in community care facilities. These facilities rely on detailed plans that analyze clients' behavior and develop strategies to predict, react, and follow up on incidents. These homes enable clients with higher support needs to live in the community in the least restrictive environment. BCBAs must draft a plan that addresses a person's behaviors but does not infringe on their rights. For example, a plan that uses a reward system, such as access to a tablet or device, for "good" behavior might infringe on personal property rights. To balance the person's specific needs in the community with their fundamental rights, BCBAs must be well-versed in clients' rights. The goal was to practice recognizing situations that actually or constructively deny the rights of people living in these homes. OCRA reviewed Constitutional and state law rights of people living in group homes. The team also went over the denial of rights process, a limited tool that lets a home deny certain rights only for very good reasons. After working through examples, the BCBAs noted that each had personal experience with the factual situations. The team came up with solutions to these problems that would avoid restricting or unreasonably denying a clients' rights. The training was tremendously productive and underscored the importance of teamwork among a person's circle of support. High-level community care homes allow people with intensive needs to remain in the community and not

institutions, but in doing so, they must be careful not to sacrifice fundamental rights.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Hannah Gets an Attorney to Challenge Conservatorship.

Hannah lives independently with supported living services. She called OCRA because her brother filed a petition to get a conservatorship over her. Hannah does not want to be under a court-appointed conservatorship and does not want her brother to be her conservator. Hannah asked OCRA to help her challenge the conservatorship. OCRA worked with Hannah and her support team to collect records to support her ability to live independently and make her own decisions. OCRA went to court with Hannah and helped her ask the court to appoint an attorney to represent her in challenging the conservatorship. The court appointed a public defender who will explore less restrictive alternatives to conservatorships with Hannah, including supported decision-making agreements.

Group Home Returns Katrina's Personal Property.

Katrina lives at a group home and has high behavioral support needs. OCRA received a denial of rights form stating Katrina's group home had taken away her iPad through the denial of rights process. Katrina's group home said they took away the iPad because she has a history of breaking electronic items. OCRA met with Katrina and talked with her group home staff. While meeting with Katrina, OCRA learned Katrina had never broken her iPad in the past. Additionally, Katrina repeatedly asked for her iPad back during the visit with OCRA. OCRA reviewed the denial of rights good cause criteria in Title 17 and determined Katrina's access to her iPad was not injurious to her, an infringement upon the rights of others, or causing serious physical damage to the facility. OCRA let Katrina's group home know the denial of rights was improper. OCRA demanded the group home return Katrina's iPad immediately. They did so right away. Katrina is happy to have her iPad back and her group home has a better understanding of the denial of rights process.

OCRA Defends Client's Rights.

Juan contacted OCRA because he was unhappy with the treatment he was receiving from his Supported Living Services providers in his home. Juan needed help in protecting his privacy, increasing his autonomy, and knowing his rights. OCRA spent time with Juan to educate him about his rights and help him prepare to advocate for himself in upcoming meetings. OCRA helped Juan be able to express exactly what he wanted and needed from his service providers. OCRA attended a multi-agency team meeting and successfully advocated for Juan's privacy, property, and personal rights. Juan felt heard and his SLS providers made the changes requested in the meeting.

REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Joseph Gets More Respite Hours So He Can Return Home.

Joseph is non-verbal. He had a crisis and was hospitalized and restrained to his bed for over 30 days. OCRA visited Joseph in the hospital, spoke to his mother about supports and services Joseph would need to return home. OCRA also talked with hospital staff about ways Joseph could have more mobility while hospitalized. Thanks to OCRA's advocacy, Joseph is back home. After Joseph's release from the hospital, OCRA advocated for the regional center to increase respite hours for his mother. The regional center increased respite by 12 more hours each month. Joseph is slowly getting back to his old schedule and his team is looking into more services to help Joseph integrate into the community again.

Lana Leaves the Hospital After OCRA Finds Her a Home.

Lana's regional center service coordinator contacted OCRA because Lana was stuck in a hospital with nowhere to go. OCRA visited Lana at the hospital, and she said she wanted to leave but had no place to live. The regional center maintained they also had no place for her to go. OCRA contacted individual service providers vendored by the regional center to ask about available support for Lana. OCRA located a group home and called a meeting to discuss it with the service coordinator. Lana agreed to move into the home and left the hospital for a new place to live with supports to meet her needs.

Sarah Gets a New Home.

Sarah did not like where she lived because it is a home for people with significant medical needs. Sarah had no socialization opportunities. Sarah also developed skin-picking behaviors that the home staff did not properly address, requiring hospitalization and preventing Sarah from moving to a more appropriate home. The home also did not allow visitors, including Sarah's behavioral services staff. OCRA advocated for Sarah to move to a new home she liked, where she would get the services she needs and break the cycle of anxiety that contributed to her skin-picking behavior. Sarah received a community care licensing exemption, and now lives in a group home she enjoys, with access to activities and visitors.

REGIONAL CENTER – ELIGIBILITY

Amber Becomes Eligible for Regional Center Services.

Amber tried to become eligible for regional center services many times over 10 years. Amber's mother contacted OCRA for help because she believed the regional center made a mistake. She also did not understand the regional center's notice of action since it was not in her language. The notice used only boilerplate language without explaining the reason for its denials. To promote self-advocacy skills, OCRA advised Amber's mother to request all records from the regional center so they could review the evaluations that led to the denials. OCRA drafted the request for Amber's mother to use. She got the records and sent them to OCRA. OCRA reviewed the records and spoke with Amber's mother in her own language. OCRA told her that the regional center's evaluation has weaknesses, but Amber only has a few records showing her developmental disability. OCRA discussed all courses of action but warned against appealing without enough records. OCRA advised Amber's mother to ask for special education assessments, then get a new evaluation from an expert who can address each weakness OCRA identified in the regional center evaluation. Six months later, Amber's mother contacted OCRA to share the advice worked, and Amber will have her first IPP meeting.

Sara is Found Provisionally Eligible for Regional Center Services.

Sara received services under the Early Start program until age 3. Her mother called OCRA worried after getting a notice of action from the regional center, denying Sara's eligibility for Lanterman services from age 3 and ongoing. OCRA spoke with Sara's mother about her right to appeal. OCRA also explained provisional eligibility, which it seemed Sara would qualify for. The regional center said Sara was not eligible because she didn't have a developmental disability. The regional center did not consider provisional eligibility, a more liberal standard. OCRA worked with Sara's mother to appeal the decision and make sure services stay the same under aid paid pending. OCRA helped her understand the criteria and evidence needed for provisional eligibility. OCRA helped Sara's mother prepare for the informal meeting with the regional center to advocate for provisional eligibility. Sara was found provisionally eligible to receive regional center services. The regional center will reassess Sara before her 5th birthday to see if she meets the criteria for Lanterman services. Sara will continue to get services from the regional center to support her development.

REGIONAL CENTER – SERVICES

Sidney Can Participate in Her Community on Her Own Terms.

Sidney is Autistic and connects with people through music. She plays the piano and sings. In 2021, a change in the law meant regional centers could fund social recreation services again. The regional center began funding Sidney's private piano, and private and group voice lessons. Because of the lessons, Sidney participated in her church band, join the school Mariachi band, and connect with classmates. Sidney even used the skills she learned in her piano lessons to play for her classmates over Zoom during the pandemic. The regional center terminated funding for these services. Sidney's parents appealed the regional center's decision. They showed the regional center the updated law about social recreation services and explained why Sidney's private piano, and private and group voice lessons should be funded. The regional center said the lessons were not "social" and not developmental disability support services. OCRA represented Sidney at a hearing and argued that the Lanterman Act required the regional center to fund Sidney's private piano, and private and group voice lessons. OCRA argued the lessons were specialized

instruction that allowed Sidney to integrate into her community, and that the regional center's purchase of service policy for social recreation services was inflexible and out of compliance with the law. The judge issued a decision finding against Sidney. About 45 days later, the state issued a directive to the regional centers that said they could not refuse to fund private lessons and could not require clients or their families to pay a co-payment or share the cost. The directive also instructed regional centers to contact clients they denied services to under their old policies for these reasons and fund them immediately. Sidney's lessons are now funded, and she can participate in her community on her own terms.

Rodrigo Moves Closer to Living Independently.

Because of his immigration status and not working, Rodrigo lived in regional center placements with other people for many years. Rodrigo asked OCRA for help to live independently and to go on a trip. Through IPP advocacy, the regional center agreed to fund a supported living services assessment which resulted in support hours to help Rodrigo find an apartment. The regional center also agreed to fund an out-of-town social recreation trip and referred him to a vendor for job opportunities. OCRA then helped Rodrigo start getting Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) benefits, which is a monthly case payment. These benefits will increase once he moves out and lives on his own.

Sarah Gets a New Place to Live.

Sarah contacted OCRA for help finding a new home where she could have more independence. Sarah found it hard to get her group home staff to listen to her. OCRA told Sarah she has the right to ask for a new place to live. OCRA explained that the regional center needs to help her with finding a place to live that meets her needs and that she likes. OCRA agreed to go to Sarah's IPP meeting and help her advocate for a less restrictive place to live. OCRA went to Sarah's IPP meeting and asked the regional center to find a different, less restrictive place for Sarah. Sarah felt empowered and explained to her service coordinator what kinds of services she wanted and what she needs in a home. After a few months, Sarah spoke with a family home agency she liked. She moved into the family home and is thriving in her new place.

OCRA Helps Sam Get Enrolled in the Self-Determination Program.

Sam's mother contacted OCRA for help to get her son enrolled into the Self-Determination Program and to get funding for social recreation activities. Sam's mother described having trouble communicating with the regional center because she could not reach anyone who could resolve the issues to help Sam complete the enrollment process. OCRA gave Sam's mother the direct contact information for the regional center director. OCRA also gave Sam's mother information about the Self-Determination Program local advisory committee meetings and the 4731 complaint process. Following emails and phone calls with Sam's mother, the regional center director responded to her, stating they would ensure timely follow up on Sam's matters. Sam is now back on track to enroll in the Self-Determination Program.

Regional Center Agrees to Pay for Joe's Group Home.

Joe and his mother called OCRA after the regional center asked Joe and his family to pay for his group home. Joe has a job and does not get any Social Security or SSI cash benefits. Joe told OCRA that the group home he found is perfect, and he is excited to move in, but was sad that money was a barrier to him living out his dreams. OCRA agreed to represent Joe and explained to the regional center that Joe is not receiving SSI and did not have the money to pay for the group home. In response, the regional center sent Joe a Notice of Action denying the group home. When Joe got the notice, OCRA filed for a hearing. OCRA researched the law and spoke with Joe's group home of interest. OCRA interviewed witnesses, gathered documents, asked for a support letter from the group home administrator, and prepared for the hearing. OCRA negotiated on Joe's behalf at an informal conference with the regional center. The regional center settled the case by agreeing to pay for Joe's group home in full.

Julia Gets Supported Living Services to Improve her Quality of Life.

Julia needs help transferring from her wheelchair to her bed. Julia was often without this support. She sometimes had to sleep many nights in a row in her wheelchair, which was uncomfortable and caused her health problems. OCRA told Julia she has the right to ask for an emergency IPP meeting since her health was at issue. OCRA helped Julia prepare for this

meeting by going over services that could help, such as Participant-Directed Personal Assistance. OCRA and Julia together called her service coordinator to discuss other services, including Supported Living Services, and Julia's preference for a particular caretaker. The regional center agreed to fund 36 hours of Supported Living Services per month to help Julia not only transfer from her wheelchair to her bed, but to also help her integrate into the community and exercise purposeful choice and control in her life.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

John Gets Back to School with Compensatory Services.

John is a 16-year-old with autism. John's grandmother contacted OCRA for help getting John back into school after his school removed him from his placement. John's grandmother told OCRA she had tried to contact the school district to find a new school but did not get a response. OCRA represented John at an IEP meeting and asked for a new school placement. OCRA also advocated for compensatory services for the educational time and IEP services the school district did not provide while John was out of school. While at the IEP meeting, John's school district found a new school for him. The district also offered compensatory services. He got 132 hours of specialized academic instruction, 2.5 hours of speech therapy, 1.5 hours of occupational therapy, and 30 minutes of counseling/vocational services. John is now in a new school, getting his IEP services.

IEP Meeting Results in an Aide for the School Bus.

Pink is a 15-year-old student with Down syndrome. Pink had incidents of undressing on the school bus. Pink's mother called OCRA for help getting her the services she needs so she will not undress on the bus. OCRA represented Pink at her IEP meeting. OCRA advocated for Pink to have an aide on the school bus and sit in the front. OCRA also asked the school district to translate previous IEPs into Spanish so that Pink's mother could read them. The school district agreed to provide an aide for Pink's school bus and to have Pink sit in front of the school bus. They also gave Pink's mother the translated IEPs.

Carrie Transfers Back to School Under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Carrie is a teenager who began the intimidating experience of starting high school. Carrie made positive changes in her new school. Unfortunately, they were short-lived because the school district (having hired a private investigator) discovered she and her mother were hopping between a family home in the district and an apartment in another district, several times a week. The district immediately withdrew her enrollment. Carrie and her mother contacted OCRA for help. OCRA learned that Carrie and her mother moved from place to place because they could not afford an apartment in their local district. Carrie and her mother had no fixed nightly residence. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, a federal law protecting the rights of homeless students, Carrie and her mother qualified as homeless, which entitled Carrie to immediate enrollment at her high school. The school district did not budge, saying Carrie was not eligible under McKinney-Vento and not allowing her to reenroll in school. Carrie and her mother appealed. On appeal, the county Office of Education sided with the district. The last step of the appeal was to the California Department of Education. OCRA drafted a strong position statement arguing that not only was Carrie eligible under McKinney-Vento, but the Act also entitled Carrie to enrollment while the issue was in dispute. The Department of Education ruled that the district must enroll Carrie while the issue is in dispute. The Department of Education sent the eligibility question back to the Office of Education, which reversed its decision and ordered Carrie's original school to enroll her. The district scheduled Carrie's IEP meeting shortly afterward.

Eduardo No Longer Hates School.

For many years, 14-year-old Eduardo hated going to school and felt he didn't belong in his moderate-to-severe special education classroom. Eduardo was now in middle school and didn't get to participate in the traditional middle school structure. He always felt out of place and often asked his mother if he could go into different classroom periods. His mother understood his struggle, but didn't know how to advocate for his socialization, academic, and proper placement needs. She continued to sign the IEPs, even when she wasn't quite in agreement with them. Eduardo was no longer interested in attending school. OCRA asked the IEP team to discuss Eduardo's current academic progress and challenged

his moderate-to-severe special day classroom placement. In speaking to Eduardo, OCRA learned that he had made friends outside of his classroom with students in the mild disability classroom. OCRA represented Eduardo in two IEP meetings resulting in an immediate change in his schedule. He will have time in the less restrictive classroom, be in one general education class, and have a lunch period with friends. Eduardo also asked for a change in high school designation since he wanted to go to the same high school his brother once attended. OCRA immediately contacted the district and got approval for the change in high school designation. OCRA also confirmed this change with the IEP team to make sure an upcoming transition meeting would be held with the correct high school staff. Eduardo is now happy to go to school and hopeful for his high school success.