

## **OCRA Semi-Annual Outreach Report July 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022**

OCRA uses outreach and training to reach underserved communities, tell people about OCRA, and provide information on substantive legal topics. In 2022, the spotlight was on statewide disparities in regional center spending based on race and ethnicity. Regional center clients, families, and other advocates spoke out and called for major changes in state law and other equity measures. OCRA outreach during this latest 6-month reporting period supported those efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in California's developmental disability service system.

This semi-annual report provides information on the outreach trainings and presentations completed during a six-month period between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022. During this period, OCRA conducted 151 outreach activities and trainings to 6,168 attendees. This is an increase in attendees and outreaches from the same reporting period between July 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021. The data reflects a 4.8% increase in the number of outreaches and an additional 1,813 people trained. The increase results from OCRA's focus to learn from and lift up unserved and underserved communities and to engage the disability community in anti-racism and equity efforts.

### **Raising Awareness About Purchase of Service Spending Disparities**

OCRA worked with underserved client and family groups throughout the year to hold community trainings and information sessions on purchase of service spending data, why it matters, and how to influence positive change. OCRA also trained staff on many ways to work with and empower community partners to attend and speak out at public purchase of service data meetings.

### **Return to In-Person Community Outreach**

OCRA remains committed to connecting and engaging with diverse clients in a variety of settings. As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its third year, virtual events remain the most common, though local offices participated in many in-person outreach events. OCRA participated in 54 in-person events – 37.5% of outreach events – compared to 10 in-person events between July 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021. OCRA staff enjoy reconnecting with existing community contacts and meeting new people through statewide outreach events.

## **Informing and Training on Changes to the Lanterman Act**

The restoration of social recreation and camping services in 2021 and the 2022/2023 changes to the regional center appeal process resulted from community activism and advocacy aimed at reducing disparities across the state. The changes can be effective only if the regional center community knows of the changes and can help put them in place. OCRA heard directly from many regional center clients and families they did not know of these changes. OCRA went into action and presented several trainings in multiple languages to tell the community about these changes in the law.

## **Direct Contact with Unserved or Underserved Regional Center Clients**

Of the 151 activities and trainings completed during this reporting period, 29.8% were directed to multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse communities. OCRA's recent [statewide conference targeting the Black and African American communities](#) is an example of outreach to traditionally underserved communities. The 2-day conference focused on what it means to be a Black person with a disability. Each conference session included regional center clients and families sharing ideas on how to demolish stigma and reclaim power. The 300 participants enjoyed having a safe space to share their challenges getting services from different agencies serving people with disabilities and their families. The conference concluded with a lively discussion about how to create a blueprint for success. More details about that conference are below. OCRA will continue to identify innovative strategies to reach regional center clients. Below are examples of outreach activities during this reporting period.

### **Self-Advocacy Trainings**

Each OCRA office conducts at least one self-advocacy training per contract year. Self-advocacy topics include emergency preparedness, self-advocacy, clients' rights, rights to money management, voting rights, community living options, and employment rights and options.

### **OCRA Brings Bingo to Day Program.**

The morning of October 14, 2022 was a typically overcast day in the coastal town of Eureka. At Gaining Ground Day Program, Redwood Coast Regional Center Clients were chatting with friends or arriving for the morning. In one large room, folks participated in an advocacy training with OCRA. Clients' Rights Advocate Clifford Black and Assistant Clients'

Rights Advocate Crisalyn Miranda came to Gaining Ground and presented a unique version of Bingo. This game helped clients learn about their rights while having fun and winning prizes. Participants were happy to join in a game before lunch. The COVID-19 crisis has left local resources scarce, so it was a welcome change of pace to experience interactive training in person. Clients, support staff, and trainers all wore masks throughout the festivities as a standard safety precaution. 25 clients participated and discussed their rights during bingo. Some clients played independently, while others teamed up and supported each other. OCRA discussed rights ranging from spending time with friends to seeing a doctor for medical needs. Clients shared anecdotes about what they choose to eat and what field trips they might like to go on. It was a fun and informative day and the clients asked OCRA for more bingo in the future.

### **General Outreach**

#### **OCRA Educates Parents about In-Home Supportive Services.**

Members of a Filipino parent support group connected to Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center's (FDLRC) were eager to learn how to increase In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) hours to keep their loved ones safe at home. During the December 2022 virtual training, Clients' Rights Advocate Boanerges A. Rodriguez Orellana provided an overview of the different IHSS services. He also provided useful strategies about how to prepare for the annual needs assessment. Boanerges recommended the specific evidence to gather to document the need for more hours or the continuation of services.

Many attendees did not understand IHSS forms, so Boanerges shared his screen to show how to fill out the "Assessment of Need for Protective Supervision" and the "24-Hour Coverage Plan." He also reviewed important appeal timelines if IHSS reduces or terminates services. The audience also appreciated learning about the different IHSS publications available on the Disability Rights California website.

The attendees enjoyed learning from each other. The lively discussion let the parents feel less overwhelmed and more equipped to advocate for their loved ones with the information they learned from the training. This event was a terrific opportunity for OCRA to connect with a new parent support group. Many participants contacted OCRA for the first time after the training.

**San Bernardino Valley College Students Learn About OCRA at Ability Awareness Fair.**

In 2022, Southern California Outreach Coordinator, Alondra Castillo, took part in her first in-person outreach event since joining OCRA in May 2022. Alondra participated in San Bernardino Valley College's Ability Awareness Fair. She shared a resource table with DRC staff from other units and met her new coworkers for the first time. Alondra had the opportunity to meet Inland Regional Center clients and introduce herself. Attendees could be added to the raffle lottery if they visited and obtained the signature of each vendor. Because of this, 70 people visited OCRA's resource table. Since the outreach was such a success, Alondra plans on attending next year.



Photo: A table is covered in a turquoise table cover with a DRC logo and 800 number in the center. Publications and outreach goodies are also displayed.

### **OCRA Connects with New Clients at Vaccine Clinic.**

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, OCRA has been exploring creative ways to reach new clients. On September 17, 2022, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Bianca Rosales partnered with staff from the Legal Advocacy Unit to staff a resource table at a mobile vaccine clinic. The facility was selected to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities. The stress-free fun environment included free food, games, and arts and crafts. DRC issued gift cards to all people getting vaccines that day. Once vaccinated, attendees went to a separate room for the resource fair. The participants would receive emergency preparedness information and brochures from different local agencies, hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves. Bianca answered general questions about regional center services. She would also conduct a preliminary screening of the issues to determine if OCRA or another unit of DRC could help with the specific issue. Bianca put people at ease after they got their vaccine.

### **OCRA Meets Children and Families at Back to School Resource Fair.**

Last summer, Special Kids Connect invited OCRA to join its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Back to School Resource Fair for children with disabilities and their families. On a sunny Saturday morning in August, OCRA Director Shannon Cogan and Maria Martinez, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate for clients of San Andreas Regional Center, introduced almost 200 people to OCRA during the fair at the Northminster Presbyterian Church in Salinas. The resource fair served the majority Latinx community in the area. Most people receiving information were Spanish-speaking and received publications and information in Spanish.

Maria and Shannon shared a kid-friendly project building creations with pipe cleaners. Many young artists spent time at the table while their parents and caregivers learned about OCRA's services and how to access Disability Rights California's online publication, Rights Under the Lanterman Act.





Photo: Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Maria Martinez and OCRA Director Shannon Cogan sitting behind OCRA's resource table displaying publications and crafts made with colorful pipe cleaners.

### **Target Outreach**

OCRA's target communities around the state are the Asian community (including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, Filipino, and Polynesian), the Black or African American community, the Latinx community, and the Native American community. 29.8% of the activities

and trainings during the reporting period were specifically directed to multi-ethnic and language-diverse communities. Clients and families from all communities can and do attend OCRA's non-target trainings also.

**OCRA Celebrates Pride Month at Hoopa Valley Rainbow Extravaganza.**

Clients' Rights Advocate Clifford Black and Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Crysalynd Miranda were excited to visit the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation for their second annual Rainbow Extravaganza. The event was sponsored by the Two Feathers Native American Family Services to celebrate the "2S" LGBTQIA+ community during Pride month. "2S" stands for "two spirit," which some North American Indigenous communities use to describe same-sex attraction and the spectrum of gender identities. Attendees played games and won raffle prizes while enjoying a delicious enchilada lunch. The organizers invited both Native and Non-Native community-based organizations to join a resource fair to share resources with the Indigenous communities. Along with OCRA, the resource fair included representatives from the local school district, Redwood Coast Regional Center, Opendoor Community Health Center's Transgender Health Services, and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. OCRA's Managing Attorney Nancy McGee also helped staff the resource table. About 35 people connected with OCRA during this fun event. OCRA's outreach efforts helped to connect with the underserved Indigenous communities.





Photo: Managing Attorney Nancy McGee and Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Crysalynd Miranda sitting behind OCRA's resource table covered in a red tablecloth.



### **Dia Del Campesino Returns to Chico.**

It was a lively return of the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Dia Del Campesino event in October 2022, after being cancelled the past 2 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hispanic Resource Council of Northern California, in celebration of National Farmer's Day, holds this event each year. There were canopies and tables all around the Downtown Plaza in Chico, with different organizations and businesses set up outside with colorful decorations. Clients' Rights Advocate Kimberlee Candela and Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Frankie Delgado serving Far Northern Regional Center clients were happy to be a part of the event. Elizabeth Campos, OCRA's Northern California Outreach Coordinator, also helped to set up a resource table near the stage. The event focused on connecting with the Latinx community, but people of all backgrounds and ages enjoyed the outdoor event. Community organizations shared information about what they do. The audience also enjoyed live music and dancing while they ate delicious food from a large selection of food vendors. Others won raffle prizes to take home. It was a relaxed and fun event, but also informative and beneficial to the community. People were interested to learn more about services for people with disabilities. Kimberlee, Frankie, and Elizabeth also explained how OCRA's services can help empower themselves or their loved ones.



Photo: Northern California Outreach Coordinator Elizabeth Campos and Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate Frankie Delgado standing behind OCRA's resource table covered in a red tablecloth.



Photo: Group of dancers wearing white and red traditional costume performing in an open plaza at Dia Del Campesino.

**OCRA Invited to Breakfast with Santa & Resource Fair.**

The Atlantis Play Center in Garden Grove held the Orange County Autism Foundation's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Breakfast with Santa & Resource Fair. The Foundation is dedicated to educating, empowering, and employing individuals with autism and other related disabilities. Everyone was encouraged to wear pajamas to the event. The attendees enjoyed the music and free food. Others participated in arts and crafts while their parents visited the resource fair.

Supervising Clients' Rights Advocate, Nidya Paredes, and Clients' Rights Advocate, Chad Escallier, each spoke with over 100 attendees about OCRA's services. They also distributed brochures in English, Spanish and Vietnamese and encouraged the participants to contact OCRA for help after the event. Each visitor to OCRA's resource booth also received OCRA-branded swag, including pens, magnets, water bottles, cups, and



reusable tote bags. OCRA's outreach goodies were popular, but a visit with Santa was still the best prize of the day.



Photo: Supervising Clients' Rights Advocate, Nidya Paredes, and Clients' Rights Advocate, Chad Escallier standing behind OCRA's resource table covered in a purple tablecloth with balloons taped to each side of the table.

### **Conference Helps Black and African American Communities Demolish Stigma and Reclaim Their Power.**

After over a year of planning, OCRA was thrilled to host its first ever conference focused entirely on the unique needs of the Black and African American communities. The conference, Demolishing Stigma, Reclaiming Power, & Measuring Success: Disability in the Black & African American Community was held on October 25 and 28, 2022.

The conference was divided into 4 sessions across 2 days. The theme was "construction," to provide knowledge for people to navigate the regional center system. OCRA consulted with one of DRC's employee resource groups, Umoja, about cultural competency. Umoja influenced the

colors used for advertising materials, created the idea for the virtual lunch trucks, recommended the music played during breaks, and emphasized the importance of having Black and African American ASL interpreters on screen during the conference.

Each day of the conference included informal lunch sessions for people to connect. The lunch sessions, called lunch trucks, were part of fostering an environment of statewide collaboration. These breakout sessions were led by staff from different DRC units, including Kristen Evans from the Housing Stability Project, Leslie Napper from the Mental Health Practice Group, and Nubyaan Scott from the Civil Rights Practice Group.

Deaka McClain, DRC's Board Chair and Chair of DRC's Community Engagement Committee, kicked off the conference with a passionate speech about her own experiences as a woman of color with a disability. Eric Harris, Disability Rights California's Director of Public Policy, moderated a lively discussion with self-advocates about what it means to be black and disabled. The speakers included Lisa Cooley, Desiree Boykin, Nicole Patterson, and Wesley Witherspoon.

The second session addressed purchase of service disparities. Clients' Rights Advocate Adeyinka Glover presented an overview of regional center's purchase of service reporting requirements. Parent advocate Nicole Richmond joined Adeyinka to help lead this important discussion. Clients' Rights Advocate Arthur Lipscomb facilitated the third panel on the self-determination program. The speakers included Founder and Director of "Parenting Black Children" Ardena Bartlett along with Felicia Ford, Founder of "Leap of Faith Advocacy and Legal Services." Maria Vargas described how the self-determination program has allowed her daughter to access community resources not available through the traditional system, given their remote location. The audience appreciated learning about the benefits and potential drawbacks of enrolling in the program.

The conference concluded with a discussion on how to create a blueprint for success. Supervising Clients' Rights Advocate Kendra Wagner moderated the panel that included DRC Board President Sandra Smith, Supervising Clients' Rights Advocate Brittnee Gillespie Malone, and the Executive Director of the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center's Family Resource Center, Yvette O. Baptiste, Ph.D.

Around 300 people attended the 2-day event. The participants provided positive feedback and encouraged OCRA to continue organizing events that focus on the Black and African communities.



## **Conclusion**

OCRA will continue to work with our staff and local community partners to identify ways to reduce disparities and eliminate barriers to accessing regional center services. To meet this goal, OCRA will identify new training strategies as OCRA continues to provide more in-person outreach and trainings. We are hopeful the increase in trainings will continue over the next 6 months.