

## June Outreach Newsletter 2018

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CALIFORNIA UNITES TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD

MEDICAL TOWN HALL

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Photo Cover: Judy Mark, DRC Board member

## Healthcare/Home & Community-Based Services Medi-Cal Town Halls – Californians Unite to Make Their Voices Heard



Individuals with disabilities and their advocates throughout the State of California united at a series of Medi-Cal Town Halls to learn about how Medicaid cuts could affect them. Judy Mark, DRC Board member, coordinated and organized these important town halls in collaboration with Disability Voices United, the State Council on

Developmental Disabilities and DRC. The Town Halls on Medi-Cal educated disability communities about how potential cuts to Medicaid in the federal budget could impact funding for services from the regional centers, In-Home Supportive Services, county mental health, special education and more. Town Halls were held in Fullerton, San Diego, Modesto, Santa Clarita, and Corona. Communities diverse in ethnicity, language, disability

and age came together as one at these town halls. DRC Outreach staff assisted with ensuring interpreters were available to translate information to the attendees. DRC produced fact sheets in various languages to further disseminate the valuable information to all communities.

Melinda Bird, DRC Senior Litigation Counsel, presented information on the potential impacts of the proposed cuts at the Fullerton Town Hall. Many in attendance had follow up questions and comments. This opened the doors for other speakers to share their valuable personal experiences about how Medi-Cal allowed them to remain in their community. One audience member, a Deaf individual, shared the importance of Medi-Cal in the Deaf community. Another audience member, a teacher at a high school with Deaf and hard of hearing students, shared that the students needed significant support and services. She provided a poignant example of a student who was admitted to a mental health hospital because of a suicide attempt. Medi-Cal insurance allowed the student to receive the services and supports she needed. This support paved the road to help her reach her goals and graduate from high school. The student continued her services and learned valuable coping skills.



The Modesto Town Hall had a similarly intense impact. Audience members shared personal stories about how programs funded through Medi-Cal saved their lives and allowed them to remain in the community with their loved ones. The training was interactive and the diverse audience was comfortable asking questions to get a clear understanding of the information. Virginia Knowlton Marcus, DRC Legal Advocacy Unit Director, presented the complex information in an accessible and easy to understand manner. Staff attorney Salma Enan's warm and friendly demeanor was well received by attendees. DRC Peer Self-Advocacy Unit Supervising Coordinator, Leslie Napper's experience had a strong impact on the audience at this town hall, and they applauded her in support at the end of her presentation.

A unifying theme was felt by audience members throughout the town halls. Their shared experiences led them to listen to each other and motivated them to learn about the impact of these cuts. They were eager to share information with their families and their communities.



*Photo (p. 2): Virginia Knowlton Marcus, DRC staff and Judy Mark, Board member.*

*Photo (p. 3): Melinda Bird, DRC staff.*

*Photo below: VMRC staff, SCDD staff, and DRC staff: Tho Vinh Banh, Salma Enan and event participants.*



**Mien Community Received In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) Training**



Iu-Mien individuals are from a vibrant ethnic group rooted in the mountainous regions of Southern China and Laos. Storytelling, basketry, complex

embroidery and jewelry making are a few examples of their rich cultural traditions. Vanessa Ochoa contacted Kao Thun, Executive Director of Iu-Mien Community Services, to present information on In-Home Supportive Services to his members. The presentation was welcomed by Kao and took place on February 28, 2018, in Sacramento. Leilani Pfeifer and Tho Vinh Banh presented information about DRC services, while Vanessa trained

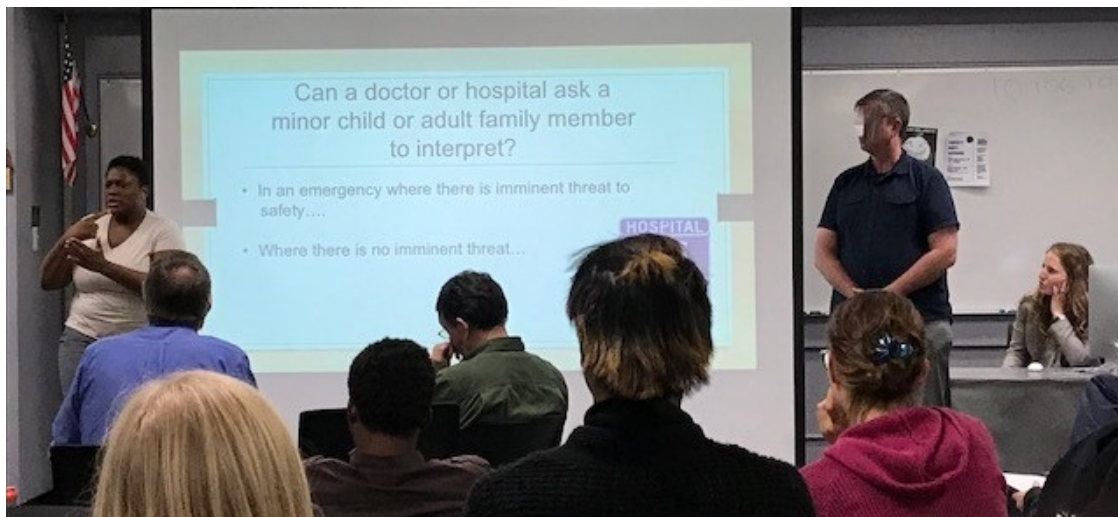
participants about IHSS. The presentation was translated in Mien with the assistance of a Mien interpreter.

The presentation was a success. Fahm Saelee, Program Coordinator from Iu-Mien Community Services, welcomed DRC staff members to return to their monthly meeting and introduced us to the 50 attendees at the event. Members were engaged and eager to learn more. Kao announced that if anyone wanted to talk to us individually, they would have an opportunity to do so. At the conclusion of the training, DRC conducted a legal clinic where intakes were completed. Several members came by to thank us for coming and asked us to come back to present again on other topics. The community demonstrated interest in the power of knowledge. DRC welcomes the opportunity to provide the necessary tools.

*Photo above: Vanessa Ochoa, DRC staff and Kao Thun, Executive Director of Iu-Mien Community Services.*

## Civil Rights

### Training on Effective Communication Empowers Ohlone Deaf Students



Ohlone Community College excels in its language program offerings that meet the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. The Language & Culture Center for Deaf Studies at the college provides one of the largest and most comprehensive programs designed to prepare Deaf and Hard of Hearing students to enter professional and occupational careers.

Professor Tom Holcomb extended an invitation to Callie Frye, DRC Sensory Disability Outreach staff, to provide effective communication training. This is the second consecutive year that Callie has been invited to

conduct the training. Dr. Holcomb has expressed that he would like DRC to provide this much needed training to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students every year.

Deborah Gettleman, Supervising Attorney, and Callie attended the morning class and heard advocacy reports from each of the students. The reports included an analysis of which Title of the ADA certain situations fall under. Students also detailed their interactions with the responsible party. DRC staff engaged with students and were able to provide further insight regarding the reports presented.

In the afternoon, Callie conducted the effective communication training to the general student body at the Deaf Studies Lab. Callie highlighted state and federal laws covering individuals with communication disabilities, interactions with law enforcement, filing complaints with various administrative agencies, and emphasized the importance of statute of limitations. Interpreters ensured both Deaf and hearing audience members could participate in the discussion. The training concluded with Deborah answering legal questions. Handouts on effective communication under the ADA and complaint processes with the Department of Justice and California Department of Fair Employment and Housing were distributed to the attendees. The presentation was very well received as many found the information and the handouts highly useful.

*Photo above: DRC staff Callie Frye and Deborah Gettleman with ASL Interpreter.*

## **Council de Manos Conference**

The Council de Manos is a national organization that focuses on the empowerment, preservation of culture, and educational training of Latinx Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened individuals through social justice awareness.

This year's conference theme, "Breaking Barriers," expressed that there is no better way to honor the Latinx community than by breaking down the social, political and economic barriers that have created such alarming inequalities. California Manos del Corazón (CMC) was this year's conference host.





DRC Outreach staff attended the three-day event and distributed information about DRC publications, and informed participants about the services DRC provides. To honor attendees at the conference and to be culturally responsive, DRC staff did not engage in spoken communication. All communication was through signs. DRC interacted with participants who expressed their disability-related situations and encouraged them to contact our Intake Unit for additional assistance. DRC staff also completed intakes for individuals that touched on a variety of topics including special education and communication access in community colleges and hospitals.

This event was an excellent opportunity to sign up more than 70 individuals for the all-day Latinx Deaf symposium DRC will sponsor next year. At that symposium, attendees will receive multiple disability-related legal trainings.

*Photo above: DRC staff Callie Frye and Vanessa Ochoa.*

## Youth

### **West Fresno Family Resource Center Health Fair for Back to School**

In preparation for back to school, more than 1300 people attended the West Fresno Family Resource Center Health Fair. DRC spoke with event participants throughout the day, and took the opportunity to network with various community agencies and learn about other available services.



Interactions with the hundreds of individuals and families at the event allowed DRC staff to educate the community about the services we offer and share valuable materials that relate to education, benefits, and employment. It was great to see the large gathering of Fresno County families receive helpful information.

*Photo above: DRC staff Ernie Moreno and event participants.*

### **Special Education Training for Spanish Parent Support Group in Baldwin Park**

Fiesta Educativa is a long-standing, independent organization that strives to provide non-English speaking families with advocacy tools to obtain the services their children need. It was a perfect collaboration between Lucia

Babb-Rodriguez, Fiesta Educativa Support Group Coordinator, and Katerine Rosales Castro, DRC Outreach staff, to provide training on special education.

Katie provided much needed information on laws that protect children in special education. She presented information on child-find provisions, evaluations and assessments, the components of an IEP, and the importance of timelines. Parents were grateful for the useful information on due process and compliance



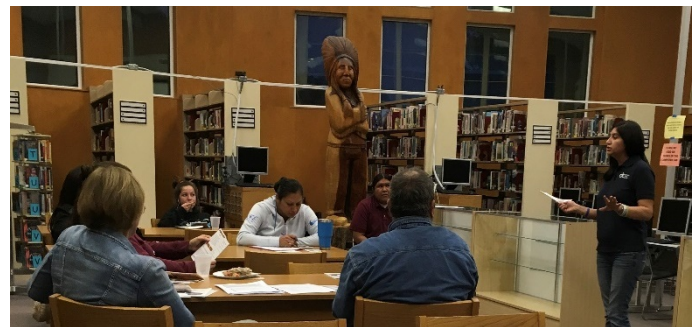
complaints. DRC provided parents with training packets that included publications and other educational resources. Parents were provided a comfortable and safe environment at the training to ask many questions. After the training, DRC staff provided one-on-one sessions with parents regarding their legal situations. Parents were encouraged to contact DRC's Intake Unit for additional assistance.

*Photo above: DRC staff Katie Castro and Spanish speaking parents at Morgan Park in Baldwin Park, CA.*

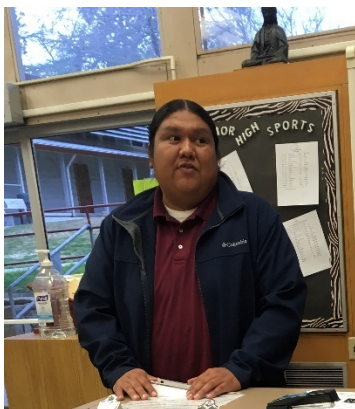
## **Native American Parents at Sierra Unified School District Receive Special Education Training**

Advocates and members of the Native American community received a presentation on Special Education and Advocacy Tips.

Jesse Lara, DRC Native American Outreach staff, provided a training



on Special Education and explained students' rights under IDEA. The training participants discussed how Native American community advocates can provide parents with needed self-advocacy skills so they can be involved in their child's education. Gavin Begaye, the Native American Program Mentor for Sierra Unified School District, asked DRC to return for future outreach and training hosted by the Indian Education Parent Group.





*Middle photo: Native American parents and DRC staff Jesse Lara.*

*Bottom photo: Gavin Bagaye, Native American Program Mentor for SUSD.*

## **15<sup>th</sup> Annual Multicultural Celebration 2018 at Shasta County**



The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Multicultural Celebration welcomed the Mien community. The Gateway Unified School District plans an annual celebration of culture each year. Vendors filled the hallways and cafeteria of the Central Valley High School Campus. Food and entertainment were provided throughout the event. The smells of delicious Gumbo, spicy East Indian food, Native American acorn soup and hot

dogs were everywhere. The celebration included Matsiko World Orphan Choir, Yoon Nam Thung, lu-Mien musicians and traditional Native American dancers.

With such a diverse gathering of people, DRC was invited to provide information to attendees about disability rights. Vanessa Ochoa, Outreach staff, provided materials about education, benefits, and employment. These materials were available in Spanish, English, Chinese, and Vietnamese. At the DRC booth children delighted at the chance to “spin the wheel” and were very excited to win a prize of pen, cup or lanyard. Their families were grateful for the useful materials and publications.

The Gateway Unified School District and Shasta County community sponsored event was so successful that it was broadcast on Channel 7 news. The school district, a major sponsor, took the lead in organizing the event. We thank them for allowing DRC to be a part of it!

*Photo above: Vanessa Ochoa, DRC staff, and Eddie, Host/MC of the event.*

## **Mental Health & Pathways to Work**

### **Cassia House and Humboldt House Residents Learn about Employment Supports**

“How can I go back to work?” “What happens to my benefits?” “I tried working and didn’t like my job!” These are all concerns that Mateo Lodge residents shared with Disability Rights California staff. “But what supports

are available for me?” is part of the information that Leilani Pfeifer and Leo Alfaro presented during their training about Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) services. Mateo Lodge consists of three mental health board & care homes. Leo Alfaro contacted staff at Mateo Lodge to offer trainings to homes to teach residents about supports available to them out in the community.

Staff welcomed Leo Alfaro and Loni Pfeifer to present to Cassia House residents. They also extended an invitation to meet and present to the Humboldt House residents. This was a new location for DRC. Both homes serve diverse individuals with mental health needs and were eager to learn more about the services they could access.

The discussion of going back to work also opened the opportunity to provide a future training on “How Will Working Affect My Benefits.” Residents had prior experience with their local job network program and some wanted to know the process of going through DOR. Because of the training, an individual was referred to the CAP Advocate in DRC’s Oakland office. The information was well received by residents in both homes. They were thrilled to find out that there were so many supports available to them.

## **Training to Mental Health Consumers at Caminar**

Caminar is a program that provides services to mental health consumers in Solano and the Bay area. Some of their programs consist of case

management, wellness and recovery, employment services, supported housing and residential treatment.

After months of coordinating with Caminar staff, DRC scheduled a presentation at their monthly staff meeting.

Caminar staff were impressed with the presentation provided by Loni Pfeifer, Michael Thomas, and Leo Alfaro. They welcomed

DRC to share the information with individuals who attend their program.

Day Program Coordinator, Dovelynn, asked DRC to come every month to present on a variety of topics. Employment was a popular subject with the audience. They welcomed DRC back to present information on employment and Social Security benefits.



DRC staff members Loni, Michael, and Leo presented information on services from the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The training focused on how consumers can work and keep some or all of their SSI benefits while working. The training took place in Solano County, where 20 participants were excited to learn the new information.

Leo Alfaro and DRC legal fellow Ali Nicolette presented information on In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) to 15 participants. Many had questions about the program and how to apply for the services. Ali provided many real life examples to the participants. This method really allowed for a clear picture on how these supports can help people live in their homes.

In April, DRC advocate Michael Thomas returned to share information about reasonable accommodations with the group. This group is always very eager to learn about their rights. They believe that the skills will help them become successful, independent members of their community.

*Photo above: DRC staff Leo Alfaro and participants at Caminar.*

## **Department of Rehabilitation Training at Palomar Behavioral Health Unit**

Navigating the mental health system can be an intimidating task. Individuals with a mental health diagnosis who are hospitalized, often do not know about the resources and services available to them. To help alleviate this, Linda Naranjo, Peer Self Advocacy Coordinator, and Raymond Kwong, Outreach staff, attended the Palomar Behavioral Health Unit to provide individuals with information on DRC and services from the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). The February training included Linda introducing herself as a peer and providing a presentation on DRC services. Raymond followed with a presentation on DOR services. He provided useful insight on details about the process, starting an application, eligibility, the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment, and when DOR may close a case. The participants were grateful for the information. A number of attendees expressed their desire to seek employment. One person shared that the information was very helpful and it gave her hope for when she leaves the hospital.

## **Peer Self-Advocacy (PSA) Unit**

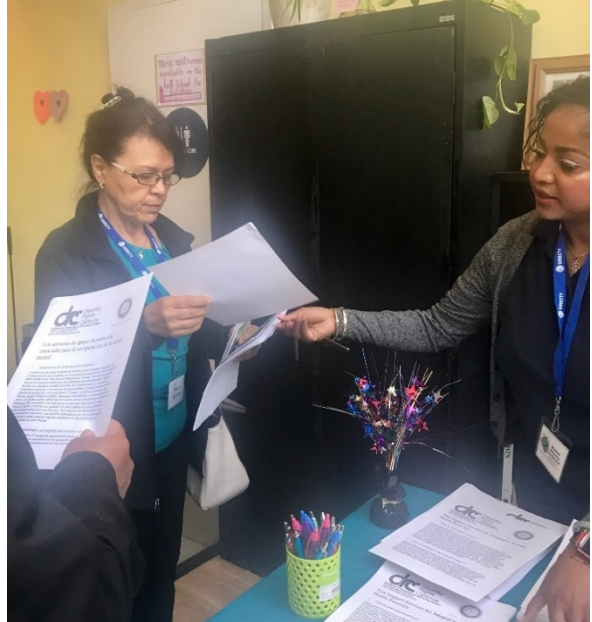
### **Western Recovery Conference – For Peers, By Peers**

Western Recovery Conference organized by Peer Action 4 Change is created by and for mental health clients, consumers, survivors and people



in recovery. This conference, unlike others, gathers a diverse community with most attendees from the African-American and Latino communities. Many also belong to the LGBTQ+ community.

To make the conference more accessible to peers on limited incomes, the registration fee is only \$10 per person. The conference is held at SHARE, a non-profit peer-run organization in Los Angeles County that offers free weekly support groups on a variety of topics. With free entertainment, music, and food donated by local businesses like Chipotle, The Cheesecake Factory and Sprouts, attendees have the opportunity to focus on valuable information and meet other peers to broaden their support network.



The PSA and Outreach Units staffed a resource table, among numerous other peer and community organizations. Over 70 people visited DRC's table where they were greeted by Katie Castro and Barbara Acosta who disseminated information on the right to receive services in their primary language, public benefits, housing, employment, and rights in higher education. Attendees shared their experiences and concerns with our staff. One person communicated their plan to apply for graduate school and had many questions about reasonable accommodations in higher education. Another person feared being denied housing because they had an emotional support animal. Staff provided them with information and resources about their rights in these situations. Catherine Towery Sales, President of Peer Action 4 Change, and Mimi Martinez McKay, Deputy Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, were among the visitors to DRC's resource table. They were impressed with DRC's services that help people with disabilities. They highlighted the great need for peers to know their rights to access services. DRC is always happy to provide information and answer questions about our services.

*Photo above: DRC staff Katie Castro (Barbara Acosta not in photo) and event participants.*

## **Promoting Student Mental Health on Campus**

Braving cold weather and rain across campus, Peer Self-Advocacy Unit, Outreach Unit and Information Technology staff hosted a resource table at the second annual California Student Mental Wellness Conference at

Jessup University in Placer County. The conference had more than 900 educators, university staff and mental health service providers in attendance. The scope of this conference reflects the growing interest in promoting student mental health and improving the school climate for people with mental health disabilities.

A large number of the participants came to DRC's table seeking materials and resources. Among the DRC publications that were provided included information on rights in higher education, self-advocacy, spirituality and mental health, reasonable accommodations and special education.

Several had questions about laws protecting students with disabilities from discrimination and their right to request reasonable accommodations. PSA staff member Barbara Acosta addressed some of these issues during two workshops she presented on psychiatric service and emotional support animals, providing information to more than 55 attendees. DRC received several requests for advocacy services and looks forward to participating at this conference again next year.

## **Inland Empire Disabilities Expo**

In an effort to encourage and enhance independent living, the 2018 Inland Empire Disabilities Expo and Inland Empire Disabilities Collaborative brought together exhibits on advocacy, assistive technology, recreational services, and senior and youth services. Among the exhibits, PSA and Outreach Unit staff also hosted a resource table at the Expo.

The annual event was held at the San Bernardino National Orange Show.



Free parking and admission brought in over 2000 attendees. The event also included food and live entertainment such as the Rollettes, the Rolling Bears Wheelchair Athletic Association, and the IEHP BMX Team.

Attendees had the opportunity browse the exhibit hall where over one hundred exhibits were set up. About 250 people visited the DRC table and received information on a variety of topics such as public benefits, Department of Rehabilitation services, service and emotional support animals, housing rights, employment, and higher education. Publications and fact sheets were provided in both English and Spanish.

*Photo above: DRC staff Barbara Acosta and participants at event.*

## Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy

### OCRA Participates in Inaugural Asian and Pacific Islander with Disabilities of California Walk 'N Roll

The heat was sweltering, but the energy and enthusiasm of all the volunteers and organizers was unwavering at the A.P.I Inaugural Walk 'N Roll. The canopies for the various organizations present created a rainbow of colors and represented a wide array of services for persons with disabilities.

DRC was represented by OCRA staff Aimee Delgado and Marlene Ramirez and Outreach staff Raymond Kwong. Staff came prepared with information, goodies, brochures, and publications for attendees. A stream of people stopped by the table and received general information about DRC and the people we serve. Attendees collected publications regarding the IEP process and crisis intervention services, and were informed of upcoming town hall meetings regarding changes to the Medi-Cal program. People expressed gratitude for the existence of DRC and were encouraged by the fact that in times of stress they would be able to call for help.

The Inaugural Asian and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities of California Walk 'N Roll was a great success. The performers, food, and organizations represented were impressive. The event provided individuals with disabilities and their families a one-stop shop of information and allowed them to create an index of resources for issues that people with disabilities may find.

### OCRA Attends the Annual Bi-national Health and Wellness Fair in Napa



The Bi-National Health and Wellness Fair is an event geared toward the Latino population to provide information and services relating to health, such as immunizations, eye exams, and dental exams. Yulahlia Hernandez, Clients' Rights Advocate for North Bay Regional Center, and Cherri Alcantara, Community Integration Clients' Rights

Advocate, teamed up to attend this year's fair held at Kaiser Permanente in



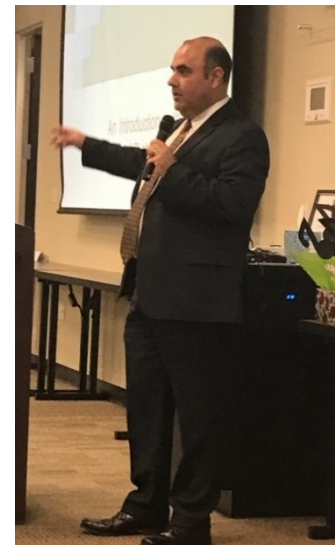
Napa, CA. This year, the fair highlighted legal workshops regarding immigrants' rights. The event also featured raffles, a taco truck, free haircuts for children, and Aztec dancers. Throughout the event, people stopped by the OCRA table to collect brochures, flyers, publications, and even stickers for the kids. OCRA answered questions about SSI, special education, and the various services available for people with developmental disabilities. The event was a great opportunity to engage with the Latino community and to teach the community about OCRA.

*Photo above: OCRA staff Cherri Alcantara.*

## **OCRA Educates Service Coordinators on the Denial of Rights Process**

Over the past year, the Kern Regional Center (KRC) has been going through many staffing changes. As a way to continue to provide education and information to both new and more seasoned KRC staff, OCRA staff presented information about OCRA services and the Denial of Rights process. Mario Espinoza, Clients' Rights Advocate, presented this valuable information to many of the 160 KRC staff members. Mario also used this opportunity to introduce the new Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate serving KRC consumers, Gabriela Rodriguez.

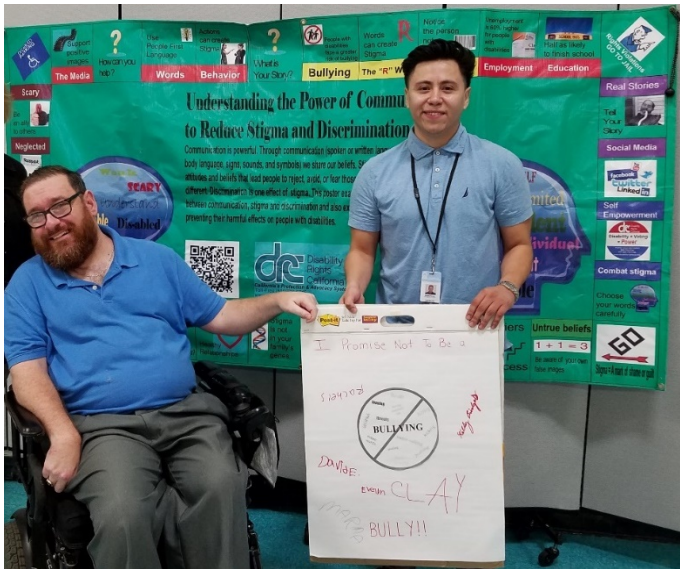
OCRA explained its ability to assist regional center clients, not just in cases involving regional center services but also cases to access generic resources from other agencies such as IHSS and Medi-Cal. Mario also discussed the procedures involved with a Denial of Rights, such as when good cause is established and duties for restoration of these rights. This was a very interactive outreach event because staff members had many questions and engaged in discussions that fostered education. OCRA provided brochures and business cards to ensure service coordinators are able to provide the appropriate referrals or contact the office directly for assistance.



*Photo: OCRA staff Mario Espinoza.*

## **Fairview Residents Pledged to Stop Bullying**

Bullying can negatively affect individuals and communities. These experiences can have a negative impact on a person's self-esteem. OCRA took the opportunity to create a "Self-Esteem and Bullying" training and presented the training for the first time to 30 Fairview residents.



At the “Self-Esteem and Bullying” training, OCRA introduced the “Stigma & Discrimination” poster to show residents that bullying is part of stigma and discrimination. Furthermore, to combat stigma and discrimination, OCRA encouraged residents to “celebrate being you.” After a discussion about examples of self-esteem and bullying, OCRA encouraged the residents to share their personal

experiences. The audience responded with meaningful insight from both the bully and victim point of view. For example, one resident shared that a peer wanted money to be his friend. By sharing relatable personal stories, they encouraged each other to participate in the discussion. OCRA also created and performed two skits on bullying to demonstrate how bullying negatively affects others. The skit also demonstrated how to positively react and address bullying. Fairview residents shared that it made them feel sad, scared, manipulated, and terrified. After a discussion on how to confront bullying, they felt better. At the conclusion of the training, everyone voluntarily signed a pledge to stop any bullying. This left everyone feeling empowered and able to respond appropriately to any type of bullying.

*Photo above: OCRA, Peer Advocate Scott Barron and Job coach Eduardo Morales .*

## **TET New Year in Sacramento**

A wonderful turnout of Vietnamese and other Asian Pacific Islander (API) families from across Sacramento gathered to attend the Lunar New Year TET Festival. Families, many in traditional and colorful garments, spent the day with friends and loved ones in celebration. The event brought well over 500 participants to enjoy the live performances, food and exhibitors.

Disability Rights California provided information to the families who attended. Tho Vinh Banh and Loni Pfeifer, DRC Outreach staff, and Alice Ximenez of the Office of Clients’ Rights Advocacy (OCRA), spoke to individuals who came to the booth and informed them about the services our respective programs provide.

Brittnee Gillespie, Clients' Rights Advocate, and Clara Torres, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate, also greeted participants who stopped by that afternoon. Staff took the opportunity to visit other booths to network with the various multicultural vendors in attendance and learn about the services provided in the community. During the event, Tho Vinh and Loni spoke to individuals about their legal issues and completed intakes for more in-depth assistance.



*Photo above: DRC staff Tho Vinh Banh, Loni Pfeifer and Alice Ximenez.*