

# December Outreach Newsletter 2017

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DRC HITS THE AIRWAVES (THE SOUND OF HOPE)

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Photo Cover: Zoey Trinh (client), Brittnee Gillespie, Cathy Zhang (radio host), Susanna Prion (radio employee), Pat McConahay and Tho Vinh Banh (DRC staff)

## Outreach Unit

### **DRC Hits the Airwaves at Sound of Hope**

The Outreach Unit’s Supervising Attorney, Tho Vinh Banh, and Communications Director, Pat McConahay worked closely with former board member Suzette Lin to secure programming with “Sound of Hope,” a radio station that serves the Chinese speaking community in the Bay Area. The segment on DRC services was taped in June and aired on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>. The segment featured a story about a Chinese American woman who needed assistance to advocate for her aunt and her twin cousins, all with developmental disabilities, to receive appropriate services from the regional center. Clients’ Rights Advocate, Brittnee Gillespie, provided the assistance that was instrumental in getting the family the services they needed. Disability Rights California Outreach staff, Raymond Kwong, was also interviewed and shared with the audience information about the services DRC provides. The program will reach an estimated 350,000 API individuals, specifically to the Chinese-speaking Immigrant community in the San Francisco, Oakland, Fremont, and San

Jose areas. The segment streamed and aired on various stations across the “Sound of Hope” network, including AM 1400, FM 96.9 (in Cantonese), and FM 96.1 and FM 104.7 (in Mandarin).

## Community Integration- Lanterman PG

### **Vietnamese Speaking Families Gather to Get One-on One Advocacy Assistance on Their Individual Program Plan (IPP)**

Over 35 family members from the Vietnamese community gathered on May 13, 2017 at a local community church in Orange County to learn about “Your IPP Rights.”



Outreach team members Tho Vinh Banh provided information about rights in connection with the Individual Program Plan (“IPP”) while Leilani Pfeifer, Callie Frye, Raymond Kwong and Leo Alfaro assisted in the day’s logistics from signing in participants, to providing materials, collecting surveys, and providing support throughout the day.



Participants learned about the IPP process, what it should contain, how to request an IPP meeting, and their rights to receive the IPP in their native language. Soon after, legal staff helped to conduct a legal clinic where parents were able to talk with the Client Rights’ Advocate from their regional center area. One-on-one legal assistance was provided to at least 17 Vietnamese-speaking families. Client Rights’ Advocates Jackie Dai from East Los

Angeles Regional Center, Jacqueline Miller from Orange County Regional Center, Aimee Delgado from Pomona Regional Center, Marsha Johnson from Harbor Regional Center, and DRC staff attorney Pilar Gonzalez provided the necessary legal assistance.

The President of the Vietnamese Parents and Disabled Children Association and the family members of that parent group were very happy and thankful for the training and the assistance DRC provided. DRC invited him and his

family to keep in touch and to request any additional trainings that the Vietnamese families may need.

*Photos Top: Vietnamese-speaking families; Below: Cynthia Solomon-ponce*

## **CELEBRATE ME! 8th Annual Self-Advocacy Conference**

Disability Rights California (DRC) was invited to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrate Me! Self-Advocacy Conference. The wonderful one-day event took place on September 14, 2017, at the Clovis Veterans Memorial Building. Over 300 individuals from the developmental disability community came together to celebrate themselves, and to learn about their rights and how to advocate for equality in employment and in everyday life. DRC and OCRA staff members collaborated to attend this local festivity and conducted the Self-Advocacy bingo game. This fun interactive self-advocacy game educates and empowers participants to learn about their rights and find resources that may assist them.



*Photos Top: DRC and OCRA staff Margie Oppel, Maricruz Magdaleno and Jesse Lara; Below: participants at Self Advocacy Conference*

# Non-Discrimination PG

## Employment Rights in Kern County



YouTube channels are not just for learning how to cook, or seeing the latest cat videos. It is also a way to convey and educate the community at large about disability rights! DRC staff attorney from the Outreach Unit, Andy Berk, presented information about employment rights at the Independent Living Center in Kern County. The session was videotaped, so others not in attendance could also access the important information.

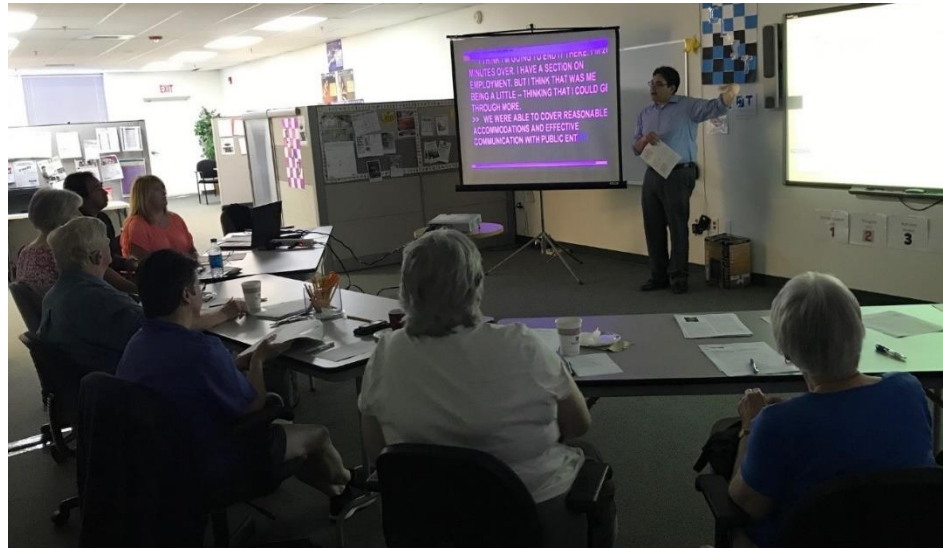
The training covered reasonable accommodations requests and when a potential employer can require someone to take a medical examination. As part of this training, Andy created a safe space for the audience to role-play scenarios that may take place during interviews or during their typical workday. The training was lively and interactive. The members of the ILCs got to test their knowledge in hypotheticals of different employment situations. Ron Ferguson, Systems Change Advocate at the ILC of Kern County, role-played a mock job interview with Andy. During the interview, they demonstrated strategies on dealing with disability discrimination in the workplace. The mock interviews initiated a discussion about the importance of self-advocacy. There was fun, laughter, and most importantly, an empowering understanding of how people with disabilities can exercise their rights in employment settings.

*Photo: Ron Ferguson from Independent Living Center of Kern County and DRC Andy Berk on Youtube*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWH0A\\_yMXc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWH0A_yMXc&feature=youtu.be)

## Hard of Hearing Participants Learn About their Rights and Effective Communication

Callie Frye, Outreach Unit staff member, reached out to Cruz Siaz, a group facilitator of a Hard of Hearing (HOH) support group, and learned that all too often, Deaf individuals do not know whom or what questions to ask when it comes



to their rights to communication access. For many of the members, it can be an intimidating experience. Callie took action and reached out to Christopher Ogata, staff attorney in the Non-Discrimination Unit, to provide much needed training to the group.

NorCal services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing (NorCal) has created this HOH group to create a safe space for individuals who experience hearing loss but do not know American Sign Language. They meet once a month and communicate through Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART). Christopher conducted the disability discrimination law training on June 24<sup>th</sup>. The objectives of the presentation were to help the audience identify state and federal laws that protect Deaf and HOH individuals from discrimination, understand their rights to effective communication when dealing with public entities and public accommodations, and how to act if they feel they have been discriminated against. Christopher encouraged participants not to delay filing their complaints if they experienced discrimination. Many members found the training informative, and the tools to self-advocacy useful. Participants who had specific questions about their situation were encouraged to call Disability Rights California's intake line to identify rights related to their individual matter.

*Photo: DRC staff Chris Ogata and participants*

## Youth PG

### **Special Education Rights Training to Spanish-speaking Families**

Twenty-one Spanish-speaking families from Chatsworth participated in a Special Education seminar, conducted by Outreach staff member, Katerine Rosales Castro. The seminar was scheduled as 6 separate 2-hour sessions that provided parents with information to enable them to advocate for their children's Special Education rights. The sessions included an overview of DRC services, addressed school based mental health services-ERMHS, provided information about advocacy to stop inappropriate discipline, explained the Individualized Transition Plan and, walked through the due process and compliance complaint to provide advocacy skills to the families. The sessions began on August 16 and ran through October 17, 2017.



Information and resources were provided in the parents' native language. Parents also had the opportunity to interact and ask questions throughout the seminar. Katie spoke with some of the participants about their situations and as a result, was able to provide advocacy assistance to them. The seminar was a success and parents are looking forward to future trainings.

*Photo Katie Castro presenting to Spanish-speaking families*

## **Families Learn about In Home Supportive Services rules at ParentsCAN**

Spanish-speaking parents of children and adults with Down syndrome and members of ParentsCAN in Napa wanted to learn more about In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). Margarita, the parent group leader, contacted DRC staff members Todd Higgins and Vanessa Ochoa to coordinate a training in Spanish for this group which took place on August 21, 2017.



Parents discovered that they shared similar challenges when seeking IHSS services. Todd is very knowledgeable and addressed their concerns and provided information about the application process. If participants needed further assistance, they were encouraged to contact DRC. Margarita, along with other members of this support group, thought the presentation was very informative and easy to understand. They requested to keep in touch to schedule future trainings.

*Photo DRC staff Todd Higgins and Vanessa Ochoa at ParentsCan*

## **Big Sandy Rancheria Tribal POW Wow Information Booth**



A wonderful turn out of individuals from all over the state of California and even a few from North Dakota came to enjoy the beautiful weather on the weekend of May 20 - 21 to celebrate Native American culture on the Big Sandy Tribal Reservation Land in Auberry, CA.

Big Sandy Tribal Council members contacted Native American Outreach staff member, Jesse Lara, to participate at their Annual Pow Wow and share information about DRC and our services. It was amazing to see the



large, diverse mountain community come together and experience the culture and beauty of the Native dancers.

Jesse had the opportunity to meet and take a photo of Jason, a Native American Dancer, in his regalia. Jason traveled from North Dakota to perform and participate at this Pow Wow. Close to 45 community and tribal members visited our booth and received information, including on Social Security and Special Education services. Members of the community were grateful that we had information to help their families. DRC enjoyed speaking with all the Native individuals who inquired about our services at the DRC booth.

*Photos: Left Big Sandy Pow wow Tribal Dancers in Regalia; Right; NA Veterans Ceremonial Blessings*

## Mental Health PG

### **Mental Health Matters Day at the State Capitol**



Speaking up about mental health is an essential part of battling stigma, and our voices are amplified when we speak up together, were among the main messages of Mental Health Matters Day. What better way of relaying that message than through actor Richard Dreyfuss, best known for starring in American Graffiti and Jaws, as a Keynote Speaker at the event held at the Capitol on May 24, 2017. Located on the east side lawn of the Capitol, over 150 families, providers and other attendees participated in the event. Whether it was to listen to the speakers, stop by and visit vendors from various organizations in Sacramento, or enjoy the entertainment, people were informed about the passionate power of awareness, action and the movement to better the lives of those with mental health challenges.

DRC staff members Vanessa Ochoa, Loni Pfeifer, Leslie Napper and Koleen Biegacki attended the event to provide brochures and mental health publications to the community who are not aware of DRC services. Materials such as “Your Fair Housing Rights as a Tenant with a Mental Health Disability,” “Preventing Employment Discrimination against People with Mental Health Disabilities,” “and “Psychiatric Service and Emotional Support Animals” were just some of the popular materials that are essential to create successful advocates in the community. One of the participants stopped by to share with DRC staff that they are very familiar with our materials and publications as our website is a resource that they often use to find helpful information. A few other participants stopped by to commend the work that DRC is doing in the community.



*Photos Top: Richard Dreyfuss guest speaker; Below: DRC Leslie Napper at event*

## Community Integration –Health PG

### Accessibility Day in San Jose

Santa Clara Valley Medical Center hosted its First Annual Accessibility Day Resource and Information Fair on Saturday, August 12, 2017. Attendees of the event were given the special opportunity to test out different modifications to many different accessible vehicles ranging from vans to trucks and even an accessible chopper motorcycle. Other resources on display included service and emotional support dogs, Tek RMD, a company that designs and manufactures mobilization devices, and various para-sport demonstrations such as wheelchair choreographed dancing, bocce ball, tennis, pickle ball and basketball. DRC staff members Angelica Galang and Leo Alfaro participated by distributing information about In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) application process, services, and appeals; and also informed visitors who came to the booth on strategies in self-advocacy. Approximately 50 individuals stopped by to say hello and collect valuable information during the event.



Several members from the community paid compliments about DRC's good work. One individual came to the table to thank staff member Todd Higgins on the advocacy and assistance he provided. A second individual came by to give thanks to Rachel Rios-Richardson for advocating for a wheelchair that allowed him to be out in the community.

DRC has collaborated with Santa Clara Valley Medical Center for some time now and has provided three workshops on IHSS to various groups affiliated with the medical center. It is no wonder that Angelica was personally invited to attend this event.

*Photo: DRC staff Leo Alfaro and Angelica Galang*

## Work Incentives PG

### **Social Security Training at Canyon Manor**

Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits can be confusing to navigate, especially when recipients are interested in going back to work. The system can be intimidating. To help guide residents at Canyon Manor, DRC Senior Advocate Michael Thomas presented basic information on Social Security to approximately 50 participants of the Education Group. Leilani Pfeifer and Leo Alfaro also shared information about DRC services and resources.

The residents learned about Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE) among other topics. Michael explained the process and how people can benefit when they go back to work. Fact sheets addressed how a person who is working can deduct the out-of-pocket costs from their earnings, and gave the residents an idea of how the process works. Many raised their hands to ask about their particular issues or share experiences they have dealt with in the past. To give participants a concrete understanding of SSA formulas, Michael and the team showed examples of actual calculations on the classroom white board. This gave the participants an idea of their benefit as calculated if they have earned

income. One resident commented that the training was very helpful and was eager to have DRC return to provide training in future.

## Peer Self-Advocacy Program Celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride in Ventura



On August 19, 2017, Peer Self Advocacy (PSA) staff member participated as a vendor at the Ventura Pride, an annual event that celebrates the lives, freedoms and wellbeing of people in the LGBTQ+ community. DRC decorated its booth with colorful ribbons and balloons to signify the rainbow that represents this

community and reflect the positive mood and energy of the festival. With live music in the background, people wandered with curiosity among the resource tables, many of them wearing rainbow colors, capes and caps. Approximately 230 people came by to collect information from fact sheets and brochures about topics such as “Your Rights to Psychiatric Service and Emotional Support Animals” and “Your Fair Housing Rights.” Displaying a neon green, the official color of mental health awareness, poster at the booth, PSA staff encouraged people to “Answer a question – win a prize” and posed disability rights-related questions such as: “What is the definition of disability?” and “What is an example of a reasonable accommodation in employment?”

Many participants wanted to test their knowledge and answer additional questions. They were interested and curious about learning new information rather than winning a prize. They asked questions such as what words to use to address a person with a disability and what



type of assistance Disability Rights California can provide. Attendees also shared their experiences with discrimination, among them they worry about retaliation from an employer if they asked for a reasonable accommodation. Another person mentioned being asked for a letter from a “state doctor” to request a reasonable accommodation for an emotional support animal at a California State University dorm. PSA staff provided them with information about their rights and suggestions on what to do when they experience discrimination. A beautiful sunset marked the end of the festival, as people left with materials and information they could use and share with others in their community and their families.

*Photos Top: DRC staff Barbara Acosta; Below: Winter Koifman*

## **15<sup>th</sup> Annual California Memorial Project Remembrance Ceremonies**



It was a moment for us to remember. On September 18, 2017, the PSA Unit held its 15<sup>th</sup> annual California Memorial Project Remembrance Day ceremonies to honor and acknowledge people with

psychiatric or developmental disabilities who lived and died at state institutions. Many were buried anonymously or in mass graves, forgotten over the years as weeds and debris encroached upon many of the burial sites. On what would otherwise be a somber occasion, over 300 people statewide respected and remembered their peers and celebrated their lives through songs, poems, personal stories and a moment of silence.

There were 10 remembrance ceremonies at 9 sites throughout the state where many graves are located. These included Patton State Hospital, Metropolitan State Hospital, Parkview Cemetery in Manteca, Ukiah Cemetery, Stockton Rural Cemetery, Porterville Developmental Center, Agnews Historic Cemetery, Sonoma Developmental Center and two ceremonies at Napa State Hospital, including one in the secure treatment area. Peers from the local communities, including the Ukiah ABC Treatment Program, Peer Self-Advocacy Program groups in San Pedro, Rialto and Riverside, self-advocates from the Center for Advanced Personal Success and San Joaquin County Behavioral Health Services,

and supporters from organizations like The Arc and People First of California joined Disability Rights California staff at the events.

Many ceremonies included a history of the California Memorial Project and speakers from local elected officials' offices, county mental health and state hospital directors and peers from the community. At the Patton ceremony, Mickey Turtle, the Native American chaplain, gathered people from



the audience and burned sage to cleanse our spirits. This set the tone at many of the ceremonies. Following a statewide moment of silence, entertainment included poems and songs written by peers, a performance of Taiko drummers and songs from a local community group in Ukiah called "The Raging Grannies." Many attendees gathered in circles, holding hands, saying prayers and placing colorful flowers at the gravesites or memorial monuments, fostering hope that life will get better for our peers.

*Photos: Above DRC staff Martha Cook; Below: Raging Grannies (singing group)*

## Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy

### OCRA Hosts IHSS Hearing Workshop

Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) invited regional center clients and family members to an In Home Supportive Service (IHSS) hearing workshop. Several people were seated around a U-shaped table. They brought with them notices of action, doctor notes, and assessment reports. Pens, paper, and highlighters were in their bags and purses. All present had a beloved family member at the forefront of their mind. All were caregivers who needed support in order to keep their loved one in their family home. All were eager for the workshop to begin.

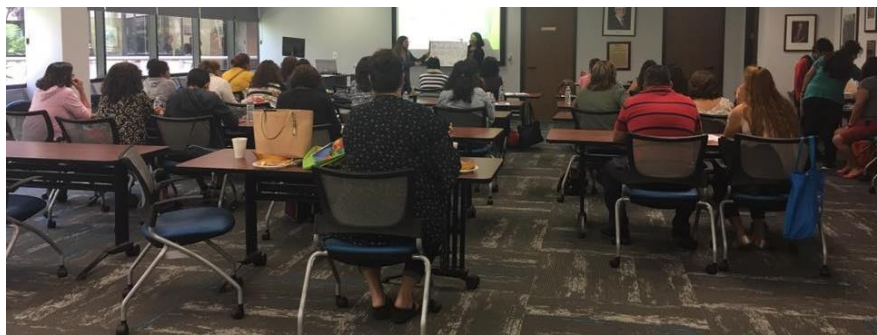
Brittnee Gillespie, Clients' Rights Advocate, OCRA, presented at the workshop to help people prepare their own cases for an IHSS hearing. The family members read through sample materials and began thinking about the evidence needed to explain their loved one's disability. They considered how they could show a judge exactly how much work went into keeping their family member safe. By the end of the training, attendees were encouraged and motivated to build up their IHSS cases so they could continue to give their loved ones the care they need.

## Regional Center Parents Learn About IHSS Overpayment Rules

On a Friday morning, the Westside TIGERS began to overtake the boardroom at Westside Regional Center for their monthly meeting - this time with OCRA as their special guest. The Westside TIGERS are a Spanish-speaking support group of parents who work together to advocate for the rights of their children who receive special education services. As more parents began to arrive, they chatted over coffee and pastries and greeted each other warmly by asking how one another's children were doing. The turnout was high and you could feel the support and love in the room. For many of these families, the children receive IHSS and the parents are the providers. Some parents have more than one child who receives IHSS. Some have one or more children who have high care needs and receive the maximum number of IHSS hours per month.



OCRA staff started the presentation by explaining when the overtime regulations passed and the importance of understanding overtime rules. In addition to using a PowerPoint presentation, OCRA used giant poster boards to create hypothetical scenarios to apply the rules. Parents eagerly took notes and followed along with the different rules. One parent pointed out that the presentation felt like a math class and that she felt great for understanding. At the conclusion of the presentation, participants said they were thankful for OCRA's time and presented both staff with a certificate of recognition.



*Photo 1: Debra Marcia, Clients' Rights Advocate and Luisa Delgadillo, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate, serving Westside Regional Center consumers; Photo 2: Parents of Westside Regional Center consumers*

## Apartment, Group Home, or With Family...Where to Live?



When considering housing options, we all must consider a variety of factors. What is our budget? Where would we like to live? Do we like the city or a more remote area? Do we want a roommate? Do we want pets? Would we want to cook for ourselves? What do we like to do on our free time that we would like to do at our new home? Inland Regional Center clients attending the Exceed Work Program in Perris had a chance to

think about these and many other questions related to living options.

Peer Advocate, Scott Barron, Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate, Jazmin Romero, and Clients' Rights Advocate, Irene Padilla from the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA) visited the Exceed program on July 20, 2017 to hold a training about living options. The trainers displayed a series of pictures that show examples of living options and discussed the different options with the participants. Participants were eager to share their experiences related to their current and former living situations. Many preferred to have their own room and only one or two housemates. Everyone enjoyed learning about and discussing the various living options.

*Photo: Scott Barron, Peer Advocate and Irene Padilla, Clients' Rights Advocate, with members of Exceed Work Program.*

## OCRA Staff Co-Present to Unilove Parent Group

The Individualized Program Plan or IPP can be intimidating for a parent who is already juggling a multitude of other things. "Unilove," a parent support group, wanted to learn more about the process and how to have an effective IPP meeting.





OCRA was invited to present a training in June 2017. Participants learned about OCRA services and advocacy tips for an effective IPP meeting. The training was well attended by parents of regional center consumers. This group is made up of families from both the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center and the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center, it made sense to have Clients' Rights Advocates for clients of both regional centers present together.

Jackie Dai and Aimee Delgado presented in English and translators were available to interpret the information in Chinese. The group had many questions and also received useful materials in both English and Chinese. Parents reported they felt comfortable asking basic questions amongst their close-knit group. This familiar setting allowed parents to learn more about the services OCRA provides and the resources available to them. It also helped them gain a better understanding of the IPP process and its importance.

*Photo OCRA staff Jackie Dai and Aimee Delgado*

## **OCRA Educates Providers**

As part of a corrective action plan for a provider of regional center services, OCRA was invited to conduct a Clients' Rights and Good Cause Denials Training. OCRA goal in training was to educate the provider's staff on clients' rights and what constitutes good cause for a denial of those rights. To better understand the staff's existing knowledge and perspective on clients' rights, OCRA took a poll at the beginning of the training.

OCRA discovered that knowledge on clients' rights was not automatic; staff had to think twice before answering a question. It was particularly difficult for staff to understand who the holder of rights was for a person with a conservator. Most importantly, they learned that a conservator does not have unlimited powers. OCRA's questions forced the staff to critically think about clients' rights and good cause denials. OCRA staff then divided the audience into two groups to analyze a real life hypothetical. The providers learned how to best approach a client situation step-by-step. OCRA staff encouraged providers to contact OCRA for help with understanding clients' rights issues. At the end of the training, the provider's staff had learned and understood the importance of clients' rights.