

## **Advocacy Report**

**July 2021 - December 2021**

*All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.*

### **BENEFITS – IHSS**

#### **Laura Gets Protective Supervision and \$40,000 in Retroactive Pay.**

In 2020, Laura's mother went to a hearing to get meal preparation hours and protective supervision through the IHSS program. The administrative law judge found for the county, so Laura's mother called OCRA for help. She completed a hazard and injury log that showed that Laura was non-self-directing and had risky, harmful behaviors. Over several months, OCRA reviewed records and prepared opening and closing statements, direct- and cross-examination questions, and a written brief. OCRA represented Laura at her hearing. After a long two-month wait, the judge issued a decision agreeing with OCRA and authorizing protective supervision and meal preparation services. The judge awarded nearly \$40,000 in retroactive payments.

#### **Young Henry Gets IHSS.**

Henry's mother contacted OCRA for help getting IHSS hours. Henry is only 3 years old. When the IHSS social worker conducted the initial assessment, he determined that Henry did not need IHSS because of his young age. Henry's mother appealed the decision. OCRA agreed to provide technical assistance to Henry's mother to prepare her for the state hearing. OCRA explained IHSS' age-appropriate guidelines and how they apply to Henry. OCRA reviewed Henry's physical and occupational therapy assessments and progress reports which showed deficits in activities of daily living, because of his disability and not his age. OCRA went through each IHSS category with Henry's mother to develop a narrative of how Henry meets IHSS eligibility and how long each task takes. OCRA prepared the exhibits, a declaration, and helped Henry's mother prepare her testimony. The administrative law judge agreed with Henry's mother and ordered IHSS to provide him with 25 hours and 15 minutes a month. Henry's mother also received a retroactive reimbursement of \$1,873. Now Henry has the help he needs to continue safely living at home.

### **Craig Gets Protective Supervision and Retroactive Benefits.**

Craig is a young man who requires constant, close supervision to remain safely in his home. Despite this need, the county IHSS program continued to deny Craig protective supervision services. Craig came to OCRA with 54 hours of IHSS per month and a pending hearing date. OCRA agreed to represent Craig. Since the county heavily relied on Craig's IEP goals, OCRA also represented Craig at his IEP meeting to clarify his needs and supports at school. With OCRA's representation at his IHSS hearing, Craig won protective supervision hours in addition to his other IHSS hours. Craig will get 249 hours per month, plus \$42,120 in retroactive benefits.

### **Gina Receives IHSS to Help Live at Home.**

Gina has complex medical needs. Her mother provides ongoing care to help Gina live at home. Gina was denied IHSS due to "sponsor deeming," where the state considers the income and resources of Gina's sponsor to determine her eligibility for IHSS. OCRA helped Gina's mother submit a new application and explain to the state that the sponsor deeming information requirement is limited to 3 years after entry into the United States and that period had passed for Gina. OCRA prepared Gina's mother to explain her needs and represented Gina at the IHSS in-person assessment. As a result, Gina was found eligible for IHSS and awarded 82 hours per month.

## **BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL**

### **Sarah's Mother Overcomes Bureaucratic Hurdle.**

Sarah's mother, also her co-conservator, contacted OCRA when Health Care Options (HCO) refused to discuss Sarah's health insurance with her because Sarah is an adult. People call HCO to enroll in or change their Medi-Cal managed care plan. Sarah's mother sent HCO letters of conservatorship and the DHCS MC-382 authorized representative form at OCRA's recommendation. One of these documents alone should have allowed Sarah's mother to speak with HCO. But they still refused to speak with her. When OCRA contacted HCO, they said to contact Social Security, because Sarah is on SSI-linked Medi-Cal. Social Security had previously told Sarah's mother they could not help. OCRA explained to HCO that Social Security, as a federal agency, cannot put an authorization into a state computer system. OCRA asked HCO for the specific screen in

Medi-Cal's system that would note an authorized representative. HCO stated it is the "QD screen within MEDS." OCRA then contacted the county customer service center, who said to call Social Security. After OCRA pushed back, the representative then said Sarah has no Medi-Cal file. OCRA explained HCO already confirmed Sarah is in the Medi-Cal system. The representative looked again and said the screen showed no authorized representative in her file. OCRA then spoke with the local county office that had received Sarah's MC-382 form. They requested OCRA fax the form again. A month later, the form was finally in the system, and Sarah's issue was resolved.

### **Jennifer's Medi-Cal is Finally Transferred to New County.**

Jennifer moved to a new county and needed to transfer her Medi-Cal. For six months, Jennifer's family tried unsuccessfully to get the county to process the transfer. OCRA assisted Jennifer in contacting a supervisor at the county Medi-Cal office. OCRA explained the delay to the supervisor and requested they approve the transfer. Medi-Cal processed the change, and Jennifer can now find new doctors.

## **BENEFITS – SSDI**

### **Tim Gets Benefits, Back-Payment, and Overpayment Removed.**

Tim's father contacted OCRA when Social Security terminated Tim's benefits and charged him with an overpayment of nearly \$60,000. OCRA reviewed the notices spoke with Tim's job coach and employer to gather more information about his job. OCRA requested Tim's supervisor fill out a form about Tim's accommodations at work. OCRA submitted the documents to Social Security showing Tim is still disabled and should still get benefits. OCRA asked them to: (1) remove his overpayment completely; (2) start his payments again; and (3) give him backpay. OCRA worked closely with Tim's local Social Security office to fix the issue quickly, which they did. They reinstated his benefits, cleared his overpayment, and issued benefits for the time he was wrongly without them.

### **Social Security Reinstates Benefits and Clears \$97,000 Overpayment.**

Jennifer and her father contacted OCRA when Social Security told Jennifer her SSDI benefit would end. Jennifer was no longer working because of her disability, but Social Security reviewed her work history. Social

Security decided Jennifer stopped qualifying for SSDI 7 years ago because they thought she stopped being disabled. Social Security stopped paying Jennifer her SSDI and said she had an overpayment of over \$97,000. They demanded Jennifer repay the money in 30 days. OCRA helped Jennifer file an appeal and contacted Jennifer's former employer to gather more information about her earnings and work environment. OCRA then provided information about Jennifer's work subsidy and earnings to Social Security. They reversed the decision and acknowledged Jennifer's disability never ended. They also removed the \$97,000 overpayment from her account, gave her a back-payment of over \$8,000, and reinstated her monthly SSDI benefit payment.

## **BENEFITS – SSI**

### **James' SSI Benefits Get Reinstated.**

James' mother called OCRA for help with understanding SSI overpayment notices and for representation at a Social Security meeting. James' Social Security benefits stopped suddenly, but it was unclear why. OCRA represented James in a meeting with Social Security. OCRA helped James' mother understand that she needed to submit certain documents to restart benefits. With OCRA's help, James' benefits were reinstated with no overpayment balance.

### **Helen's Overpayment is Dismissed and SSI Benefit is Reinstated.**

Helen and her mother asked OCRA for help navigating an overpayment reconsideration request they filed with Social Security a few months earlier. OCRA helped Helen follow up with Social Security and explain why the overpayment of more than \$20,000 was an error and that she was not over-resourced. Helen provided proof she properly transferred the funds causing her to be over-resourced to another account and that Helen did not have access to those funds. Social Security agreed, reinstated Helen's benefits, and dismissed the overpayment.

### **SSI Reinstated After Social Security Makes Mistake About Pandemic-Related Income and Retirement Account Rules.**

Samuel's mother called OCRA because he had an SSI overpayment of over \$4000 and his SSI benefits had stopped months before. Samuel is a minor and during the COVID-19 pandemic, Samuel's mother lost her job and got unemployment benefits. Pandemic relief is not income, but Social

Security was incorrectly saying the mother's unemployment benefits made Samuel ineligible for SSI. Social Security also incorrectly counted the mother's retirement account as a resource, which also made Samuel ineligible for SSI. Samuel's mother missed the 60-day timeline to file an appeal, since she was overwhelmed caring for Samuel at home while his school was closed due to COVID-19. OCRA filed a late appeal with good cause on Samuel's behalf. Social Security accepted the appeal and immediately agreed to retroactively reinstate Samuel's SSI benefits. This action eliminated the SSI overpayment and started his monthly benefits again. Social Security paid back Samuel's mother over \$4000 in SSI benefits. She was relieved and said the SSI money would be very helpful in paying past due bills they incurred during the pandemic.

## **HOUSING**

### **OCRA Helps Client Get Access to His Section 8 Housing.**

Aki's brother contacted OCRA when Aki moved. Aki needed help to be able to use his Section 8 voucher in the county where he lives. OCRA reviewed documents and wrote a letter asking the county who issued the voucher to "port" it the county Aki now lives in. The Housing Authority approved the request to port the housing choice voucher. Aki began to look for housing where he lives.

### **Nancy Obtains Parking Permits at Her Apartment for SLS Staff.**

Nancy contacted OCRA for help getting parking permits for her supported living staff. Nancy explained that their cars were being towed, even though they were parking in her assigned space. The apartment complex has no guest parking. Management verbally denied parking permits for Nancy's staff, and she was concerned they would quit because their cars were being towed. Nancy also asked to have a support person go with her when talking with management, but management said no. Using the information Nancy provided, OCRA helped Nancy write a request for a reasonable accommodation. In the request, she asked that staff be allowed to park in her designated parking spot. She explained that she needed the support to live independently and provided a letter of support from her psychiatrist. The request also asked management to respect her disability-related request for someone to be with her when speaking to staff at the complex. The next day, management told Nancy that her request was approved, that

staff were being issued parking passes, and that she may have someone with her during any discussions with complex staff.

## **OUTREACH AND TRAINING**

### **Participants Learn About Voting in the Recall Election.**

As the recall of Governor Gavin Newsom approached, OCRA worked hard to educate people with disabilities about their right to vote. Scott Barron, OCRA's Peer Advocate, collaborated with Disability Rights California's Voting Rights Advocate, Gabe Taylor, for a training on strategies to make the September recall election more accessible. The 26 participants from Easter Seals day program learned about the purpose of the recall election. Gabe also reviewed important election timelines including the deadline to register to vote. Scott reminded the attendees that Access Paratransit in Los Angeles county offered free transportation to the polls on Election Day. He also suggested people who get regional center services add language to their Individual Program Plan about the type of support they need to vote. Gabe and Scott covered the process to vote by mail and how to locate Los Angeles County's closest drop box for their ballot. The presenters encouraged the participants to contact Disability Rights California's Voting Hotline if they had questions or trouble with the voting process. The audience enjoyed learning ways to make sure their vote counted in this important election.

## **PERSONAL AUTONOMY**

### **Mike Gets Court to Remove His Conservator with OCRA's Help.**

Sam was Mike's co-conservator and representative payee for his Social Security benefits. Sam received Mike's government stimulus check, but refused to give it to Mike. Mike asked OCRA to help remove Sam as his co-conservator and payee. OCRA contacted Sam and told him to give Mike his stimulus money. OCRA was also in contact with the local Court Investigator to talk about Mike's concerns. The court investigator agreed with OCRA that Sam could not keep Mike's stimulus money. Because of Sam's behavior as Mike's conservator, the court removed him as co-conservator. OCRA also asked the Social Security fraud department to open a case to investigate Sam for accessing Mike's money as payee and not giving it to him. OCRA also asked Social Security to remove Sam as the representative payee.

## **REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION**

### **Jack Moves Into The Community.**

Jack went into a locked facility because of his aggression and drug use. He wanted to go into a less restrictive setting as soon as possible. He hoped to finish school and have a steady job. OCRA attended meetings, reviewed assessments, and advocated for him to move to a less restrictive placement. After nine months, Jack finally moved from the locked facility. He is now living in a sober living home and achieved his goal of living in a less restrictive setting.

### **A Team Effort Secures a Fair Placement for Edgar.**

Edgar is an elderly man with various mental health diagnoses. In the 1980s, he was found not guilty by reason of insanity after an incident at his board and care home. He was placed at a State Hospital. For over 30 years, Edgar bounced from the State Hospital, to the community, and back. After Edgar was recommended for outpatient treatment again last year, his public defender recognized a pattern and contacted OCRA for help. OCRA had a videoconference with Edgar and reviewed records. Meanwhile, Edgar's public defender recruited a neuropsychologist to perform an assessment and draft a report. The report detailed Edgar's diagnoses and strongly recommended placement in a community setting. OCRA scheduled an IPP meeting to reflect the goal of community placement. OCRA also drafted a letter to the judge in Edgar's case detailing his need for particular care and outlining the types of placements available to regional center clients. When it was time to renew Edgar's hospital placement, Edgar's public defender convinced the district attorney to drop the petition with some conditions. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has created roadblocks, Edgar is meeting with residential facilities with good prospects for finally getting a fair shot at community placement.

### **Mateo Returns to the Community after 2 ½ Years in Locked Facilities.**

Mateo was in his second Institution for Mental Disease (IMD) placement, and although his behaviors were infrequent, they were often relatively severe, mostly involving property destruction. When OCRA asked what had changed in his new placement, Mateo explained he had found a girlfriend, a fellow resident. Mateo shared he destroyed property because he was frustrated he and his girlfriend had no privacy. OCRA talked with

Mateo's IBSP team and recommended updating his behavior plan with strategies respecting the couple's privacy rights. OCRA also identified a violation of Mateo's rights in his behavior contract that restricted his access to cigarettes. The IMD said Mateo lost his smoking privileges because of unsafe behavior. OCRA explained that Mateo has a personal right to his possessions under the law and personal rights cannot be treated as privileges to be earned. OCRA advocated with the facility's program director and administrator. Shortly after OCRA's call with the administrator, the facility said Mateo was ready to be discharged. After a supported living services assessment and several months of cross-training, Mateo transitioned to his own apartment and eagerly gave OCRA a tour.

### **Beth Successfully Secures Community Placement.**

Beth is a 38-year-old woman with schizophrenia and mild intellectual disability. Beth was living at a mental health facility. A lot of regional center clients struggle in these types of facilities because facility staff don't understand developmental disabilities. Beth was no exception. Instead of sending Beth to another facility, Beth's IPP team got her into a State-Operated Stabilization Training Assistance Reintegration (STAR) home for crisis treatment. OCRA got involved with Beth's case on her first day at the STAR home and attended her monthly meetings during her stay. Beth is a strong self-advocate, especially about her two favorite passions: coffee and shopping. She used community outings to enjoy herself after work and to demonstrate her ability to live safely in the community. Her slow but steady progress in 2021 reflected Beth's ability to succeed when given the opportunity. Unsurprisingly, Beth's progress was noticed by a group home closer to her home. One morning with coffee in hand, Beth left for her new home.

## **REGIONAL CENTER – ELIGIBILITY**

### **Amanda is Eligible for Regional Center.**

Amanda sought help from OCRA as she was soon aging out of the foster care system and would be without those supports. When living in another county, Amanda applied for, but was denied, regional center eligibility. After Amanda was newly diagnosed, OCRA worked with her to reapply for regional center services. The regional center denied Amanda based on the prior denial. OCRA prepared and submitted an opinion letter summarizing Amanda's new evidence and highlighting why Amanda should be made



eligible. OCRA worked closely with the regional center intake specialists to coordinate the exchange of documents and help with appointments and transportation for a new round of assessments. Amanda was found eligible for regional center services five months after reapplying. Amanda will now receive regional center services for her developmental disability, especially important since she no longer has foster care supports.

## **REGIONAL CENTER – SERVICES**

### **Nikki Has Work and Social Goals Added to Her IPP.**

Nikki had an open case with OCRA for 2 years. She is deaf and blind. She was in a locked facility for one year, with OCRA attending her many IPP and team meetings. OCRA assisted Nikki in her transition back to the community. Now living with her mother, she vehemently expressed her goals to both work and have a baby. OCRA advocated on her behalf and got Nikki referred to the Department of Rehabilitation for work. The regional center also added social-sexual educational goals to Nikki's IPP because of OCRA's advocacy.

### **Araceli Gets Back her American Sign Language Services.**

After the regional center suspended Araceli's American Sign Language (ASL) instruction services, Araceli and her mother contacted OCRA. OCRA advised Araceli to appeal the suspension even though the regional center did not provide adequate notice. OCRA contacted the regional center, which explained concerns related to the ASL provider's licensure, insurance, and set-up as a regional center vendor. The regional center advised they were looking for a replacement provider and directed Araceli to explore a list of generic services. OCRA pointed to the regional center's failure to provide a service agreed to in the IPP and the regional center's obligation to help secure generic services. OCRA also checked some of the generic services offered and found some were not free. At a later IPP meeting, the regional center announced they would hire an independent living skills provider who knows ASL. Araceli and her team agreed to this solution.

### **OCRA Helps Sean Get Support Services Needed to Attend College.**

Sean enrolled in community college and needed disability-related supports to participate in his classes. Because Sean did not have support services, he could not finish his classes for the semester. Sean contacted OCRA for

help. Sean was supposed have to Tailored Day Services provided by the regional center to help navigate community college, but they had not started. OCRA contacted the regional center and advocated for the Tailored Day Services to start. Within four days of OCRA's initial call to the regional center, Sean started working with the Tailored Day Services agency. Sean now has the support he needs to attend college next semester.

### **David Gets Respite for His Son Who Receives Early Start Services.**

David requested respite services from his son's Early Start service coordinator several times over six months. Each time he requested the respite, the service coordinator told him the regional center never provides respite for families with children in the Early Start program. The regional center provided no notice of action or explained his right to appeal the denial. David contacted OCRA and explained his wife worked full-time, and his son was up every night screaming, had to be fed constantly day and night due to a medical condition, and had intensive therapies at various places during the day. David was also responsible for caring for his other child, which included driving him to and from school. David and his wife worked together to meet the needs of their children, but were exhausted and had their own health issues. OCRA advised David to schedule a meeting with the service coordinator and supervisor to discuss respite. After explaining his son's developmental and medical conditions, and the lack of adequate sleep, which was affecting both parent's health, the regional center agreed to provide respite services.

### **Bethany Continues Her Master's Program.**

Bethany called OCRA for support after her supported living services provider suddenly quit. Bethany's regional center service coordinator could not quickly find another provider and Bethany was left without the support she needed to continue living in her own apartment. Bethany was upset at the regional center because the only option they found for her was a move to a temporary board and care home. Bethany was also stressed because she had upcoming finals and was not getting the support she needed to complete her coursework to continue her program. Bethany feared she would not meet the expectations and would need to drop from the program and start over. OCRA stepped in to help Bethany request an emergency IPP meeting. The regional center held the meeting within 7 days and OCRA supported Bethany as she explored placement options and new

supported living services vendors. The regional center agreed to fund Bethany's move to a new city with the services and supports she needed to continue with her college Master's Program. Bethany is now living independently with support. She recently started an internship to continue achieving her educational goals.

### **Helen Keeps Her Personal Assistance Hours.**

Helen and her family recently moved into a new regional center catchment area. Helen's mother contacted OCRA because the new regional center greatly cut Helen's personal assistance hours. OCRA counseled Helen's family on how to keep her 234 hours per month of personal assistance. OCRA equipped Helen's parents with information about their right to receive a notice of action 30 days before a change in service, fair hearing rights, and that all communications from clients to the regional center and any agency should be in writing. The family successfully advocated for the full restoration of Helen's personal assistance hours.

### **OCRA Helps Rafael Get a New Independent Living Service Provider.**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Rafael was receiving support services from an independent living service provider. However, during the pandemic, the service provider could not meet Rafael's needs safely and Rafael had no services. For over a year, Rafael had multiple service coordinators and no consistent case management support to help him find a new provider. After much frustration, Rafael called OCRA for help. OCRA informed him of his right to advance notice before a change or termination in services is made and the regional center's obligation to secure services according to his IPP. OCRA got the regional center to reinstate Rafael's services with one call. OCRA advocated for referral packets to be sent to agencies immediately. As a result, Rafael continues to live independently with support.

### **Leo Gets Over a Self-Determination Hump.**

Leo is a 5-year-old boy with autism who recently entered the self-determination program. Leo's budget was very minimal and did not consider his unmet needs. Leo's parents contacted OCRA for help after his service coordinator denied their request to add horse and music therapy to Leo's self-determination budget. Leo's parents researched and identified how both treatments would meet Leo's social, language, emotional, and

cognitive needs. OCRA advocated for his regional center to review the unmet need and adjust Leo's budget accordingly. OCRA also asked the regional center to consider recent changes to the law, allowing for regional centers to purchase social and recreational services. After speaking with the regional center's directors, Leo's budget reflected his needs. Leo is now moving forward with the self-determination program.

### **Saul Receives ABA and Other Needed Services from Regional Center.**

Saul is a 16-year-old with epilepsy and intellectual disability. He had very aggressive behaviors and recently needed crisis intervention services. OCRA represented Saul and his parents at several meetings with the regional center. The team discussed Saul's need for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy and other services. The regional center agreed to a courtesy vendorization of a provider so Saul can receive behavior therapy and other needed services from the provider of his choice.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **June Receives 300 Hours of Compensatory Education Services.**

June is an elementary school student who received almost no special education services during the COVID-19 pandemic. OCRA helped June's mother draft and file a compliance complaint against the school district for not implementing June's IEP. The school district agreed to provide 300 hours of compensatory education services. The school district also agreed to provide the services over 18 months instead of the typical 12 months, so June was not overwhelmed over the course of one year. June will receive the special education services she needs.

### **Sam Gets Home and Hospital Instruction.**

Sam's mother first requested independent study from the school district because she did not want Sam to go to in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attending school in person was risky because of Sam's medical issues. OCRA represented Sam at two IEP meetings. During the first meeting, the team agreed independent study would not be appropriate for Sam. Based on Sam's medical diagnoses, OCRA asked about home and hospital instruction. OCRA represented Sam at a second meeting to negotiate placement. The school district agreed Sam qualified for home and hospital instruction.

### **One Call Gets David Into a Safe Remote Learning Program.**

David's family did not want him exposed to a greater risk of getting the COVID-19 virus. They called OCRA for help getting David into a remote learning program rather than in-person instruction. David's service coordinator referred the family to OCRA because David attends an elementary school that would not offer him an option to learn online. After a brief intake call with David's family, OCRA agreed to contact the school to get more information. OCRA resolved David's issues with one call after exchanging information with the school. The school quickly held an IEP meeting to allow David to stay in his school of choice and learn from home with services and supports. David can now continue learning while in the safety of his own home.

### **Adam Maintains His Special Education Eligibility.**

Adam's mother contacted OCRA after the district changed his IEP into a 504 plan without their consent. The district argued that Adam was no longer eligible for special education after reviewing the results of his triennial assessments in 2019. OCRA recommended Adam's mother request more assessments, and the district agreed to do them. OCRA represented Adam at an IEP meeting. The new assessments established that Adam remained eligible and in need of special education services. The district reinstated his IEP services and recommended more services, including occupational therapy. Adam can now return to school with the supports and services needed to help him access his education.

### **School District Told to Provide Proper Interpretation After OCRA Drafts Compliance Complaint.**

Rosalina's mother called OCRA after the school district provided an interpreter for just 30 minutes during her annual IEP meeting. The interpreter told the mother she could only ask "yes" or "no" questions since they did not have enough time. Rosalina's mother is monolingual Spanish-speaking and needs an interpreter to participate in IEP meetings. OCRA helped Rosalina's mother by drafting a special education compliance complaint for her to submit to the California Department of Education. The complaint asked the state to order the school district to provide sufficient time for IEP meetings with interpretation in the future. After Rosalina's mother filed the complaint, the school district immediately rescheduled the IEP meeting with proper time for an interpreter. Rosalina's mother was

able to meaningfully participate in the IEP meeting and advocate for special education services for her daughter.

### **Sergio Gets Independent Study Without Giving Up His Special Education Rights.**

Sergio's mother contacted OCRA after his school district asked her to sign a "mediated" agreement before enrolling Sergio in independent study. OCRA reviewed the agreement and determined it broadly waived his right to claims under several laws - state and federal special education law, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and Section 504. Sergio's mother decided not to sign that agreement at OCRA's recommendation. OCRA wrote a letter to the district requesting the required IEP meeting to discuss independent study, a diagnostic/temporary placement in independent study pending that IEP meeting, and a copy of the independent study agreement required by state law. The district agreed to all of OCRA's requests. OCRA could not represent at a later IEP meeting, but Sergio's mother found another representative and secured Sergio's IEP services in independent study.

### **Mateo Will Attend Kindergarten Full-Time.**

Mateo's parents contacted OCRA, concerned about whether Mateo would be able to go to school more than one day a week in kindergarten. Mateo had almost finished his transition kindergarten year, but had been limited all year to attending school only one day a week. The rural school told the family this was because Mateo needed an aide to access his education, but they were short-staffed. Mateo's parents are monolingual Spanish-speakers and had trouble getting information from the school and advocating for Mateo's educational rights. OCRA contacted the school district administrators and called for a meeting as the current academic year was ending. At that meeting, Mateo's parents asked all of their questions and the team set up a new way to communicate. The school responded to OCRA's advocacy by developing a plan for the next academic year. Mateo would attend school at another site, to be determined once the new special education consortium for small rural schools finalized where the special day classes would be. Mateo would receive special education transportation and other services and supports. The school held another meeting in late summer to discuss the plan for the upcoming year with Mateo's parents and to answer their questions.

### **Andrew Gets Independent Studies.**

Andrew's mother wanted to enroll Andrew in an independent studies program. Andrew's medical condition makes him vulnerable to upper respiratory infections. The school district denied their request several times and threatened them with a due process hearing because Andrew's mother was keeping him home for his own safety. OCRA represented Andrew's mother in a memorandum of understanding meeting with the special education supervisor. At the meeting, the supervisor denied Andrew's request for independent studies. OCRA then teamed with the DRC legal advocacy unit and filed a temporary injunction that was granted. The injunction forced the school to provide Andrew independent studies under the law in Assembly Bill 130 (AB 130).