

Advocacy Report - July 2023 through December 2023

All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

These stories show OCRA's range of services to clients. In some cases, OCRA provides advice and advocacy tools for clients to help themselves. In others, OCRA provides legal advocacy and represents clients directly at a meeting or hearing. These stories show both "lay" and "legal" advocacy.

BENEFITS – IHSS

Randy Gets Protective Supervision with Back-Payment of \$40,000.

Randy's family contacted OCRA after Randy was denied protective supervision hours through IHSS. Randy is an older adult with a loving family that takes care of his daily needs and supports him throughout the day. Randy's family helped him appeal the denial. After learning about his needs, OCRA represented Randy and negotiated an agreement with the county to reassess Randy in his home instead of going to a hearing. OCRA met with Randy and his family several times, at their home and in the office, to help them prepare for the assessment. OCRA also attended and advocated for Randy during the IHSS in-home reassessment. The county ultimately agreed that Randy needs protective supervision. As part of the negotiations, the county gave Randy and his family a retroactive payment to the date of the first IHSS assessment. This 11-month back-payment came to over \$40,000.

Karla Keeps her IHSS.

Karla's mother contacted OCRA for help with the termination of Karla's IHSS benefits. During a call to schedule a reevaluation, Karla's newly assigned social worker insisted on a specific date, despite Karla's mother explaining they would not be available that day. The social worker refused to reschedule. Karla's mother tried to resolve this with the county, but no one got back to her. Karla received a letter terminating her IHSS based on non-cooperation. OCRA advised Karla's mother to appeal and explained how she can resolve the issue by speaking with the appeals specialist. By negotiating with the appeals specialist, Karla's mother successfully rescheduled the in-person reevaluation, requested a new social worker to handle Karla's case, and preserved Karla's IHSS hours.

Alexa Gets Needed Services at Home After a Hearing.

Alexa needed an increase in her IHSS hours. Instead of an increase, the county reduced Alexa's hours to just 6 per month at the annual assessment. Alexa's mother appealed and asked for help to prepare for the hearing. She completed the IHSS self-assessment worksheet to show the time it took to provide different services. OCRA reviewed and explained the notices to Alexa's mother and helped organize documents she could use at the hearing. OCRA drafted the declaration for Alexa's mother and prepared her for the hearing. After the preparation with OCRA, she felt confident explaining Alexa's needs at the hearing. After the hearing, Alexa received a positive decision and was found eligible for 60 hours a month of IHSS. She received several months of retroactive pay for hours back to the annual assessment date.

OCRA Helps Jimena Get Protective Supervision.

Jimena is a young adult who lives at home with her family. Jimena's family speaks Spanish and contacted OCRA for help with her upcoming IHSS assessment. The family knew Jimena needed protective supervision but had trouble describing the help she needed at home. OCRA agreed to attend Jimena's IHSS assessment. OCRA reviewed Jimena's regional center records and pulled out documents showing she needs supervision to stay safe at home. OCRA gave records to IHSS and met with Jimena's family many times before the IHSS assessment to prepare and see Jimena in her own home, to better understand her needs. With OCRA's help, Jimena's family understood the protective supervision eligibility criteria and gave more examples of how Jimena needs help to stay safe at home. At the assessment, OCRA helped Jimena's family discuss her need for protective supervision. OCRA provided examples and discussed Jimena's needs during the assessment. Jimena was granted 270 hours of IHSS protective supervision, an increase of 240 hours per month.

BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL

Andy Gets Medi-Cal with No Share of Cost.

Andy's mother contacted OCRA after he was suddenly switched in to a Medi-Cal program with a high share of cost. She asked for help appealing this decision. The share of cost was so high that it almost equaled all of Andy's entire monthly income from work. OCRA reviewed his documents

and contacted another specialty legal aid agency for advice on what other Medi-Cal programs Andy could be eligible for. OCRA relayed this information to Andy and his mother and advised her how to negotiate with the appeals specialist. After several weeks of struggling to reach the appeals specialist, Andy's mother finally did so. They agreed Andy should not have a share of cost. Andy's mother agreed to a conditional withdrawal from the hearing since Andy would now be switched to the appropriate Medi-Cal program.

BENEFITS – SSDI

Tony Gets Help After Missing an Important Call.

Tony received SSI and SSDI benefits for over 15 years. One day, he received a notice from Social Security saying both benefits are stopping. Tony needed help understanding the notice, so he called OCRA. The notice said Social Security tried to call Tony to schedule a doctor's appointment, but he never called back. They planned to stop Tony's SSI and SSDI benefits unless he appealed within 10 days. OCRA helped Tony file his appeal within the 10-day timeline. OCRA also requested records from the regional center and submitted those records to Social Security with the appeal. Tony will receive his benefits while the appeal is processed. OCRA also helped Tony update his phone number with Social Security so he will not miss important phone calls.

Andrea Gets Increase in SSI, New Social Security Disability Benefits, and Back-Pay.

Andrea works and gets SSI benefits. Andrea's mother contacted OCRA to see why Andrea was getting a reduced amount, not due to her earnings. After reviewing notices and contacting Social Security, OCRA helped Andrea document that she was paying her fair share of household expenses. Social Security increased Andrea's SSI benefits by \$300 per month. During its review, OCRA discovered that Andrea should have been getting Disabled Adult Child (DAC) benefits in addition to her SSI benefits. Andrea's mother applied for DAC benefits years ago, but due to an address error and no bank account on file, Andrea never received these benefits. Once Social Security got Andrea's updated information, they paid her \$4,450 benefits for the months she should have been receiving DAC benefits but did not. OCRA also helped Andrea get monthly DAC benefits of \$377 each month.

BENEFITS – SSI

Camila Wins at Hearing and No Longer Owes Money.

Camila's mother contacted OCRA for help with her daughter's SSI benefits. Camila received a letter terminating her SSI benefits and another saying SSI paid her \$11,485 too much because she was over the allowable resource limit. After reviewing records, OCRA found that Social Security counted income tax returns, Pandemic Economic Impact payments, child tax credits, and child support payments for Camila's stepbrother, as resources. OCRA helped Camila's mother submit her arguments to Social Security that these were allowable resources, not to be counted against Camila. Social Security found partly in her favor by reinstating Camila's SSI benefits and reducing her overpayment. Mother contacted OCRA again for help. OCRA found that Social Security still did not exclude all the resources and represented Camila at an administrative hearing. OCRA gave the judge a financial analysis and more evidence showing the source of the excludable resources. The judge ruled in Camila's favor eliminating the remaining overpayment amount. Camila now has her benefits and owes nothing to Social Security.

Robert Recovers Missing SSI Payment.

Robert contacted OCRA because Social Security had not paid his SSI benefits. Robert recently became his own representative payee, but Social Security mistakenly sent his SSI benefits to his previous representative payee. OCRA agreed to investigate and contacted Social Security. Social Security told OCRA they could not stop the payment. OCRA requested that Social Security draft a letter explaining their error. After Robert showed the letter to his previous payee's bank, the bank moved the money to the correct account.

Wendy Keeps her SSI Benefits.

Wendy's mother contacted OCRA because Wendy's SSI benefits were being reduced. OCRA reviewed Social Security notices. Wendy lives with a roommate whom Social Security believed was Wendy's spouse. If Wendy were married, her spouse's income would reduce the SSI benefit she would get each month. After OCRA identified the issue, they helped guide her mother on how to correct the error. OCRA went over the marital questionnaire and appeal form they would need to correct the error with

Social Security. The family submitted the appeal and the forms within the timeframe OCRA gave them. Wendy's mother told OCRA that Social Security corrected Wendy's record. She is now getting the correct amount of SSI, owing nothing.

SSI Overpayment Eliminated After a Hearing.

Carlos's mother contacted OCRA for help with an SSI overpayment of over \$10,000. Carlos is a child with autism and his mother is a monolingual Spanish-speaker. OCRA represented Carlos at a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge and drafted briefs arguing that Social Security incorrectly determined that Carlos had been overpaid. OCRA successfully advocated for Carlos and the judge found that Carlos's overpayment did not exist. With the large debt erased from the record, Carlos will continue to get the financial support he needs to remain at home.

DISCRIMINATION

Jake Attends Summer Camp with Peers.

During the first week at a privately funded summer camp, Jake was sent home due to behaviors related to his disability. The camp staff told Jake's mother he could not attend the camp. His mother contacted OCRA who had recently helped to get a 1:1 behavioral aide added to Jake's IEP at school. OCRA quickly provided Jake's mother with administrative complaint options and asked if she had submitted or received any paperwork from the summer camp. She had not. OCRA advised Jake's mother to make a formal reasonable accommodation request and sent her a sample request letter. The next day, Jake's Mom sent Jake back to the camp and sent the request letter to the camp's director. The camp then hired an additional counselor and Jake attended the camp for the rest of the session.

EMPLOYMENT

Johnnie Re-Enters the Work Force with Confidence.

Johnnie's employer terminated him from his first job after finding out that he is autistic. Johnnie felt downtrodden and believed they terminated him because of traits he exhibits from his autism. OCRA talked to Johnnie about his options. Johnnie decided he did not want to pursue any legal or administrative actions. Instead, he wanted to use this experience as a

lesson and focus his energy on getting a new job that better fits his unique skills and needs. OCRA talked with Johnnie about the potential pros and cons of self-disclosing an "invisible disability" in the workplace and advised him on how to request reasonable accommodations. OCRA helped Johnnie brainstorm accommodations that might help to avoid issues he faced at his previous job. Johnnie left the meeting feeling far more hopeful about his future job prospects, as he now had a greater understanding of his rights as a person with a disability in the workforce.

HOUSING

Jordan Gets a Reasonable Accommodation to Keep His Housing.

Jordan lives in subsidized housing. Each year, he needs help to complete his recertification paperwork. Jordan lives by himself and has an independent living skills (ILS) service provider through the regional center. Jordan's landlord asked him to complete his yearly recertification paperwork. In the past, Jordan's ILS provider helped him complete the paperwork. But this year, the landlord refused to allow the ILS provider to help Jordan, even after he requested a reasonable accommodation to allow for this help. OCRA worked with Jordan and his ILS provider to get a reasonable accommodation approved through the property manager. Jordan completed his recertification paperwork with the support he needed to maintain his subsidized housing. OCRA also provided Jordan information on filing a complaint with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and with the California Civil Rights Department.

Lisa Gets Accessible Parking.

Lisa and her mother live in a townhome complex that has assigned parking, requiring residents to park in their garage. Lisa uses a wheelchair, and the entrance to the parking garage was not accessible. Lisa's mother could not park in the garage and safely get Lisa into their home. Lisa's mother asked to park in front of their home because of Lisa's needs, but the homeowner's association denied the request. OCRA helped Lisa and her mother formally request a reasonable accommodation to park in front of the house. Shortly after receiving Lisa's new request, the HOA granted the request, and they can now park in front of their home.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

OCRA Participates in 21st Annual California Memorial Project Ceremony.

“Gone But Not Forgotten” was the theme of ceremonies sponsored by the California Memorial Project (CMP). The CMP’s mission is to honor and restore dignity to people with mental health and developmental disabilities who lived and died in California state institutions. The remembrance ceremonies happen on the third Monday of each September at state institutions and local cemetery gravesites where these honorees were buried. This year, organizers decided to also spotlight residents who presently live in those same institutions. Peer Advocate Scott Barron was invited to be a guest speaker at Metropolitan State Hospital in Norwalk. He spoke about joining together to encourage his peers to advocate for themselves in this restrictive setting. Vanessa Ramos, Community Organizer at DRC, also shared her personal story about her time at a state hospital. DRC’s Peer Self-Advocacy Supervising Coordinator, Rosy Tellez, shared an original poem and read poems written by the Hospital’s residents. Hospital staff spoke about how much they enjoy their work. The Hospital’s Director, Dr. Michael Barsom, emphasized that discharge planning now begins immediately upon admission to the Hospital. This is an important change from how new patients were treated in the past. This was the first opportunity for many to gather since the pandemic. Everyone was excited to reconnect again while honoring those gone, but not forgotten.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Team Upholds Taylor’s Right to Refuse Treatment.

Taylor is an adult who is under a conservatorship. Taylor did not want to receive certain medical treatment. Her parents are her conservators and were given the right to consent to medical treatment for Taylor. Her parents believe that ABA therapy is required for Taylor to make progress towards her goals. Taylor does not like ABA therapy. She consistently requests to go home and has violent behaviors while attending ABA therapy. Taylor’s specialized group home requested OCRA attend Taylor’s team meeting because her parents were adamant they could force Taylor to attend ABA therapy. OCRA attended the meeting and advised her parents, as well as the home and regional center, that Taylor has the right

to refuse behavior modification techniques that cause pain or trauma, even though she is conserved. OCRA explained that some people who have received ABA therapy found it to be a traumatic experience. OCRA advised that based on Taylor's expressed wishes and behaviors, it was clear she did not want to participate in ABA therapy. Taylor's parents were upset they could not force Taylor to attend ABA therapy. While Taylor's parents were not receptive, OCRA established her right to refuse ABA therapy with the regional center and the staff at her home.

OCRA Helps Michael with His Right to Terminate Conservatorship.

Michael is an adult consumer who is under a conservatorship. His parent is his conservator. Michael lives in a house with his parent and gets supported living services for his everyday care. Michael reported to a staff member at his day program he did not feel safe at home because of his parent/conservator. Michael said he wanted to move into a group home, but his parent had the power to control where he lived. OCRA met with Michael to discuss his options. Michael decided that he wanted to be able to decide where to live and wanted to end his conservatorship. OCRA found and contacted Michael's public defender who had represented him in his previous conservatorship hearing. Michael's attorney is now looking into the case and working with Michael to end his conservatorship.

REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Arjuna Finally Finds the Right Care Home with OCRA Support.

Arjuna is a young adult with ASD and epilepsy. For years, Arjuna, his co-conservator parents, and the regional center struggled to find a group home that was both capable of caring for Arjuna's intensive behavioral needs and close enough to support frequent visits with his tight-knit family. Arjuna became eligible for adult residential facilities when he turned 18, but after several did not work, they settled for a stable, lower-level home near family. It became clear that the staff at this new home did not have the skill or experience to support Arjuna. Arjuna does not communicate verbally and staff at the home did not seem able or interested in learning to care for him. Concerned for their son's wellbeing, Arjuna's parents replaced the home's staff for 12 hours per day. When the regional center did not address the home's deficiencies or look for alternative placement, Arjuna's parents reached out for help. OCRA stepped in and, after an initial IPP meeting, began hosting regular "check-in meetings" with the regional center

and Arjuna's parents, to discuss progress on alternative placements. Arjuna finally moved to a community crisis home. Unlike his previous residence, community crisis homes are tailored to meet his needs with experienced staff and close behavioral analysis. Arjuna's transition to this home went smoothly and OCRA continues its advocacy role by reviewing Arjuna's individual behavioral supports plan monthly.

Barb Successfully Moves to a Less Restrictive Community Placement.

After living many years in a locked facility, Barb returned to her hometown community to live in an Enhanced Behavioral Supports Home. Barb's transition caused her increased stress resulting in some behavioral incidents. As a result, the new home proposed restrictions on Barb's rights which violated the Lanterman Act. OCRA provided wraparound support to Barb – educating her about her rights and the very limited times the home can restrict them. OCRA contacted the home and educated her new staff about her needs and rights in her placement. The home withdrew their proposed restrictions and Barb continues to work with her staff to make her new home a success.

Jesse Is Moving with New Supportive Staff.

Jesse had moved into a facility during the COVID-19 pandemic after complications with their health. The regional center believed Jesse got worse since moving into the facility and wanted to advocate for Jesse to move into a placement that could better meet Jesse's needs. The regional center asked OCRA for help. OCRA visited Jesse in person. During the visit, OCRA learned Jesse is a non-verbal person and could not direct their advocacy. Jesse had no privacy, support staff, or personal belongings that reflected that Jesse lived in their room. Jesse was not being treated well and their condition worsened since moving there. Jesse had no family or friends that could help. OCRA was concerned with the condition of the facility and Jesse's treatment. OCRA attended Jesse's transition meeting with his current home, possible new home staff, and regional center staff. OCRA asked that Jesse's transition be expedited. Jesse moved to a new home within 15 days of OCRA's visit. OCRA visited Jesse after the meeting and was happy to see Jesse react to the sound of OCRA's voices. Jesse even opened their eyes. Jesse now has support staff available 24/7 to help with health conditions, music therapy, and physical therapy to help Jesse be as independent as possible.

REGIONAL CENTER – SERVICES

Joffrey Wins an Appeal for Social Recreational Services.

Joffrey's mother contacted OCRA after receiving several notices of action denying Joffrey social recreational services. Joffrey is in the self-determination program. The regional center agreed to only fund a portion of his martial arts classes and refused to fund services to help Joffrey attend summer camp. OCRA advised Joffrey's mother on how to prepare for the mediation. This included requesting an increase in Joffrey's budget to accommodate the summer camp and the full rate for martial arts classes. As a result, the regional center awarded full funding for summer camp and martial arts classes. Joffrey now has access to social recreational activities to integrate into the community.

Sal Gets Speech Therapy Services.

Sal is an adult who showed progress and interest in developing his speech and language skills. Sal's parents contacted OCRA for help to get regional center funding for speech therapy. The regional center denied funding for these services because it did not believe Sal's speech skills would improve. Sal's parents paid out-of-pocket for speech therapy one day per week to show that Sal could succeed. Sal also filed an appeal. OCRA supported Sal by reviewing his records and attending mediation with Sal, his parents, and the regional center. At mediation, the regional center agreed to fund speech therapy for Sal three days per week. Sal now has the services he needs to continue his progress.

OCRA Helps Nidia Get a Service Coordinator and Her First IPP.

Nidia asked OCRA for help contacting the regional center to hold her first IPP meeting so she could access services to become more independent. Nidia called the regional center multiple times over several months and always received the same response. She had to wait to schedule an IPP meeting and access services until the regional center assigned a service coordinator. OCRA contacted the regional center to advocate for immediate service coordination. After OCRA's communication with the regional center, they assigned Nidia a service coordinator and held an IPP meeting. After the IPP meeting, Nidia informed OCRA that the meeting went well, and the regional center would start to provide her with the services she needs to become more independent.

Bryan Gets the Services He Needs at an IPP Meeting.

Bryan is a 3-year-old whose mother contacted OCRA because he was not getting any regional center services she asked for, and the service coordinator was unresponsive. Bryan's mother was at a loss about what to do, given Bryan's needs and her unfamiliarity with the system. OCRA reviewed Bryan's IPP and noticed that Bryan had no services in his IPP. OCRA agreed to represent Bryan at an IPP meeting and discussed Bryan's need for respite, behavioral services, diapers, wipes, and a specialized stroller. The regional center agreed to provide 120 hours of respite, and over \$500 worth of diapers, wipes, and gloves. Bryan's mother learned what she needed to do to get behavioral services and the specialized stroller from their insurance. OCRA helped Bryan's mother with steps to get the items from insurance and advised her OCRA can help get them from the regional center if the insurance provider denies them.

Jenny Gets Transportation to Court.

Jenny wanted a new conservator. Her mother was her conservator. Jenny contacted OCRA for help getting her group home to drive her to the courthouse so she can file a request to challenge her conservatorship. Jenny told OCRA she had asked the group home staff to drive her to the court, but they said no. OCRA agreed to call Jenny's service coordinator at the regional center to ask for their support. Jenny's service coordinator contacted the group home, and they scheduled a time to drive Jenny to the courthouse. Jenny can now advocate for herself and file court documents so she can challenge her conservatorship.

Antonio Gets Many New Services from the Regional Center.

Antonio's family contacted OCRA for help because since 2021, Antonio had no day program to attend. Antonio also did not have a regional center service coordinator. OCRA reached out to the regional center about these concerns and began to work directly with the regional center supervisor to address them. After many phone calls, OCRA represented Antonio at an IPP team meeting to advocate for Antonio and his family. The regional center agreed to all services and supports discussed and agreed to help Antonio access other resources. The regional center agreed to fund a day program and a 1:1 aide. The regional center also agreed to help Antonio with college courses, getting help from the Department of Rehabilitation, respite, and behavioral services.

Purple Finds Long-Term Placement After Eviction from Group Home.

Purple risked becoming unhoused after her group home evicted her. OCRA responded to this emergency by representing Purple at her regional center IPP meeting. OCRA asked the regional center to pay for Purple's temporary stay at a hotel while they found Purple a long-term home. The regional center told OCRA they previously found a place, but she rejected it. OCRA explained that their proposed location would not work because it triggered Purple's past trauma. After the explanation, the regional center agreed to pay for a hotel while they found a permanent home with appropriate services. OCRA continued to monitor the case through Purple's temporary hotel stay. The regional center later found an acceptable placement. Purple reports she likes it and wants to stay long-term.

Eric Can Access His Bathroom Again After Getting a Ceiling Lift.

Eric's mother contacted OCRA because Eric cannot safely access his shower or bathtub. He has a Hoyer lift, which is unsafe for him to use. Because the Hoyer lift is unsafe, Eric could only get sponge baths. The regional center agreed to fund bathroom modifications, including a roll-in shower, but did not communicate or cooperate with Eric's mother to secure contractors or otherwise help with construction. The regional center also denied a modification request for a ceiling lift, which would replace the Hoyer lift as a safer option for Eric to access his bathroom. OCRA tried to resolve the issue through an IPP meeting, which did not work. As part of Eric's appeal, OCRA attended mediation on Eric's behalf to establish the regional center's responsibilities in helping Eric complete the modifications and funding the ceiling lift. The regional center ultimately agreed to take the lead on communication with contractors and funding a ceiling lift. Eric is now on track to safely accessing the bathroom and taking a shower in his home.

Regional Center Funds Social Club Membership Before Fair Hearing.

The regional center initially denied Alexa's request to fund her membership at a social club where she could participate in activities, play games, and socialize with people she liked. Alexa's mother appealed the denial on her behalf. Her mother attended an informal meeting and mediation with the regional center to try to resolve the case. But they did not reach an agreement. The parties were scheduled to attend a fair hearing in front of

an Administrative Law Judge. OCRA provided Alexa's mother with advocacy strategies and went over relevant fair hearing and social recreation rules. OCRA also reviewed and evaluated medical documents. OCRA emailed the regional center a settlement proposal explaining why they should fund Alexa's membership at the social club. The regional center ultimately agreed to fund Alexa's membership at the social club, resolving the case shortly before the hearing date.

Roger Can Resume Visits with His Family.

Roger lives in a group home as decided by a court order under Welfare and Institutions Code, section 6500. While residing at the group home, he regularly left to visit his family in their family home - both for day and overnight visits. When Roger was assigned a new regional center service coordinator, the new coordinator felt uncomfortable with the unsupervised family visits and stopped Roger from visiting, due to the 6500 order. OCRA told the regional center that 6500 orders can dictate placement, not visitation, but the regional center still did not allow the visits. OCRA gathered information from Roger's family, conservator, group home staff, and regional center records, to decide how to advocate for Roger's wish to visit his family. OCRA requested an IPP meeting and told the regional center Roger behaved well during visits with family and explained there had been no special incident reports immediately before or after visits with his family. OCRA requested his IPP team develop a visitation plan that works to meet Rogers cultural needs and goals and addresses the regional center's concerns. Roger resumed visits with his family.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Miguel Gets Free Appropriate Public Education for 4 More Years.

Miguel's mother contacted OCRA because the school district terminated Miguel's IEP and stopped his services by issuing a high school diploma without his consent when he turned 18. OCRA told the school district, which agreed, that Miguel should receive services until the age of 22. OCRA represented Miguel at his IEP team meetings. The school district agreed to revoke Miguel's diploma and enroll Miguel in his preferred school program with services. He will have a vocational assessment, counseling, guidance, career assessment, specialized academic instruction, language and speech, and an extended school year. The school district also agreed to provide Miguel with compensation for the missed services.

Carly Gets an Educational Assessment After Missing School.

Carly missed a lot of school days because she had many behavioral incidents. Her parents believed that she needed more services to support her in the classroom. The school district assessed her, but determined she did not qualify for behavioral services. The district thought she would outgrow the issues and recommended a 504 plan. Carly's parents disagreed and contacted OCRA. OCRA provided information about functional behavioral assessments, IEP development, and Uniform Complaint Procedures. Carly's parents talked with the district again. The district agreed to conduct an educational assessment and Carly's parents and educational team are developing her IEP.

Elias Transfers to a New School.

Elias is a student who was being bullied at school. Elias's parent called OCRA to see what could be done to protect Elias in the school setting. The parent reported Elias was experiencing daily bullying and discrimination at school based on their disability and gender identity. OCRA reviewed the IEP documents and represented Elias at an IEP meeting. Elias's parent had already notified the school of the bullying and had attended an IEP to address the issue, but the school was not responding appropriately or timely to protect Elias. OCRA requested an interdistrict transfer to a different school on behalf of Elias. OCRA negotiated a Resolution Agreement with the school's attorney for the transfer to a new school. Elias started school at the new campus and reports they are doing well and feeling better about their educational setting.

OCRA Helps Student Get School Placement After Years of Home Instruction.

Sam is a teenager who is nonspeaking and has many behavioral support needs. Sam had been at home for years with only behavioral support and home instruction because his last school setting could no longer serve him. Sam's family is bilingual, and the school district never had interpretation at their IEP meetings. Not having an interpreter led to miscommunication and distrust between the school district and Sam's family. OCRA helped Sam's family request updated school assessments and an IEP meeting to discuss Sam's need for a school setting. For over a year, OCRA represented Sam during 4 IEP meetings and attended many school tours with Sam and his family. When Sam visited one school placement, he had a big smile and

seemed very comfortable. OCRA made sure there was interpretation while Sam's family toured the school and helped the family ask questions. The school district and family agreed to place Sam at that school. Sam's family said having interpretation during IEP meetings and tours made it possible to discuss their concerns without misunderstandings. Sam is finally getting school services in the least restrictive environment.

Green Gets the 2:1 Staff He Needs to Return to School.

Green stopped attending school because the district told his mother they did not have the resources to address his behaviors. OCRA immediately called for an IEP meeting and represented him. OCRA enforced Green's rights to remain in school by discussing his needs and requesting more support. The school district determined that he needed two people to help him during the school day. They paid for an additional 1:1 aide and for the county to provide another staff person. Green returned to school with the 2:1 support he needs.

TRANSPORTATION

Elizabeth Gets Paratransit Access.

Elizabeth called OCRA because she did not have consistent access to paratransit services. Paratransit sometimes would send a cutaway bus that was not accessible to her. OCRA called the paratransit agency to follow up with Elizabeth's previous requests to not send the cutaway bus as part of her paratransit schedule. The paratransit agency said they would call Elizabeth back to process her request, but they never called. Later, the paratransit agency even claimed Elizabeth never responded to them and tried to close her case. OCRA called them again, requesting they keep Elizabeth's case open. OCRA provided the dates and times of every phone call and every paratransit staff person's name. After 3 months, the paratransit agency finally granted Elizabeth's request to exclude the cutaway bus from her paratransit schedule, ensuring that paratransit will only send vehicles accessible to her. Elizabeth can now safely access community activities like swimming, doctor appointments, and visits with her family.