

**Advocacy Report  
July 2017 - December 2017**

*All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.*

**BENEFITS - CCS**

**CCS Authorizes New Equipment for Dylan.**

Dylan outgrew his wheelchair of many years. Because of a change in his health, he was also in need of a stander to support his body weight. Dylan's father tried unsuccessfully to replace the outdated wheelchair. OCRA agreed to advocate for Dylan to obtain a new wheelchair and stander from California Children's Services (CCS). OCRA represented Dylan in a formal, telephonic meeting with CCS. As a result, Dylan will receive a new wheelchair and was recently measured for a stander to be used at his home.

**Pedro Gets A New Wheelchair.**

Nine-year-old Pedro has cerebral palsy and needs his wheelchair to safely navigate his home and community. Pedro had been using the same wheelchair since he was four. His body had changed a lot in five years and his wheelchair was too small. Pedro would unintentionally swing his leg over the side of the chair, resulting in bruises. When Pedro's mother expressed her concern to CCS therapy unit staff, she was told to tie his ankle to the chair to stop him from swinging it. OCRA attended a CCS assessment and advocated for new, appropriate equipment and for Pedro to be able to sit in his chair with his leg untethered. The CCS therapy unit staff agreed to provide Pedro with a new, larger wheelchair that will meet his needs.

**BENEFITS – IHSS**

**Jonah Wins Support to Live at Home after Filing a Writ.**

Jonah began living with his grandmother and aunt after both of his parents passed away when he was a baby. Jonah, now age 7, needs constant supervision to protect him from harm. Although the county IHSS program did not dispute the need for protective supervision, it denied the service because Jonah receives Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) benefits.

The county viewed the AAP benefits as an alternative resource to protective supervision, meaning his adoptive parents must use that money to pay for supervision. After Jonah went to a hearing and received an unfavorable decision from the Department of Social Services State Hearings Division, Jonah and his grandmother sought help from OCRA and DRC's Legal Advocacy Unit (LAU). Together, LAU and OCRA appealed the administrative decision by filing a Writ of Administrative Mandamus. The Writ was granted and Jonah obtained the maximum hours of protective supervision dating back more than two years. Jonah will continue to live at home with the services he needs. The Department of Social Services also issued an All County Letter explaining that AAP is not an alternative resource. This will ensure that all families receiving AAP can get the IHSS they are entitled to.

### **OCRA Helps Karl Get Protective Supervision.**

Karl's application for IHSS was denied after his social worker said that his mother was not prevented from working an outside job to care for him. She also had not appealed within the required 90 days because she had not received any written notice of the denial. OCRA agreed to represent Karl at hearing. OCRA filed for hearing explaining that it was late due to the "good cause" of the county never sending a written notice. OCRA also requested that any retroactive payments go back to the application date. A few weeks before the hearing, the county agreed to reassess Karl in his home. The county then granted protective supervision hours retroactive to the application date, for a total of 268.41 hours per month.

### **Cynthia's IHSS Case is Reopened and Reassessment Conducted.**

Five-year-old Cynthia has significant cognitive disabilities, autism, and is non-verbal. She requires assistance in dressing, feeding, and bathing. She puts herself in dangerous situations because she is not self-directing and has no sense of danger. She also runs away from home and school. Her needs are well beyond that of a typical five-year-old. Cynthia's father contacted the IHSS program and obtained the required IHSS medical documentation from Cynthia's doctor. He also gathered records from speech therapists, the ABA provider, physical therapists, regional center, and the school district. Two months later, the IHSS social worker conducted the needs assessment. Cynthia's father provided all of the documentation to the social worker. Two months after the assessment, the IHSS social worker called Cynthia's father and told him that he should

withdraw the application because Cynthia would not be approved for more than two hours per month of IHSS. Cynthia's father relying on the social worker, did not think he had a choice, unaware of his right to appeal, agreed to withdraw. The next day, Cynthia's father received a Notice of Action advising him that he had withdrawn the IHSS application. OCRA filed for hearing and successfully negotiated with the County to reopen the application, conduct a new assessment, and issue IHSS hours back to the date Cynthia would have been eligible.

### **Brothers Benefit from the IHSS Advocate Inquiry Process.**

Brothers Aidan and Gavin had been receiving IHSS services for over 10 years. When their new IHSS social worker came to their home for an unscheduled annual reassessment, the brothers and their care providers were not at home. One week later, the IHSS social worker called and asked if she could come to the house right away because she was in the neighborhood. The care providers asked if she could come that afternoon instead because they were taking one of the brothers to a medical appointment. The social worker said she could not come later in the day. She then sent notices terminating Aidan's and Gavin's IHSS. Their IHSS care providers made multiple calls to the IHSS social worker and her supervisor, but received no call back. OCRA recommended that the brothers request a fair hearing. OCRA then sent an inquiry to IHSS management. OCRA requested that the County IHSS worker call the care providers back, schedule the annual reassessment, and issue a notice of action after the assessment. IHSS management immediately responded, called the care providers and assigned a new IHSS social worker for both brothers. IHSS scheduled in-home reassessments and reopened both cases. IHSS issued new notices reinstating Aidan's 283 hours per month and Gavin's 231.5 hours per month pending the reassessments.

## **BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL**

### **Sam Goes Home After Months-Long Hospitalization.**

Sam had a small scratch that eventually turned into a large wound. He was hospitalized for months with a severe skin infection requiring multiple skin grafting surgeries. Sam's sister contacted OCRA to report that the hospital sought to discharge Sam without any homecare services in place, despite Sam's open wound which still required medical care. OCRA visited Sam in the hospital and gathered information from Sam's sister, regional center

staff, and hospital staff. OCRA advocated for the hospital and regional center to return Sam to his home with appropriate medical services and supplies, including in-home nursing services. The hospital discharged Sam to his home with all requested services in place. Shortly after his discharge, Sam's sister contacted OCRA again to report that Sam was without nursing services because nobody would work at the rate offered by Medi-Cal. OCRA advocated for in-home nursing services provided by the regional center pending the hire of a nurse funded by Medi-Cal. The regional center funded Sam's nurse and his wound has now healed completely.

### **OCRA Helps Manny Get Eligible for Medi-Cal.**

Manny's mother contacted OCRA after he was denied Medi-Cal and placed on a multi-year long waiting list for a home and community based waiver program. Manny is a baby who has a rare genetic disorder with complex medical needs requiring around the clock care. He is often in the hospital for extended periods of time. Without Medi-Cal, he would not have access to IHSS or in-home nursing services. These in-home services are less restrictive than an acute hospital setting and allow for him to be with his family. When Manny was home from the hospital, his mother was overwhelmed caring for him, his siblings, and maintaining employment outside of the home. This family desperately needed the services and supports available through Medi-Cal. After researching different Medi-Cal waiver programs and finding one where he met the eligibility criteria, OCRA wrote a demand letter to the State requesting that Manny receive an immediate assessment. He was quickly assessed and determined to be eligible for the Home and Community Based Alternatives (HCB Alternatives) Waiver. Manny now has Medi-Cal and both he and his family are on a better path to stability.

## **BENEFITS – SSI**

### **Joseph Maintains Crucial SSI Benefit.**

Joseph was about to turn 18 when his SSI suddenly ended and he did not receive his check. Joseph has limited reading abilities, and his family members only speak and read Spanish, which made completing English SSI forms impossible. Because Joseph's SSI evaluator did not speak Spanish, the evaluator could not speak with Joseph's family to find out about his disabilities and Joseph himself was not able to explain his

disabilities. OCRA reviewed SSA notices, quickly filed an appeal, and requested benefit continuation. SSI benefits were reinstated the following month, pending the appeal, and Joseph was able to pay for his rent and food. OCRA gathered records and attended two IEP meetings to ensure all of the support Joseph was receiving at school was documented in his IEP. For example, Joseph was graduating with a diploma, but when OCRA asked how he met the diploma requirements, the school district said the diploma was for his good efforts and not because he met actual academic requirements. OCRA asked that this be documented in the IEP. OCRA asked the analyst involved in reviewing Joseph's SSI case to find out what additional records were needed. OCRA gathered the requested records, obtained the SSA teacher questionnaire, and submitted that information with a legal brief demonstrating how he qualified for SSI benefits as an adult. Shortly afterward, Social Security found Joseph eligible for SSI benefits.

**Sandra is Found Eligible for SSI and Receives Retroactive Award.**

Sandra is an 8-year-old girl who was referred to OCRA by Legal Aid after they were unsuccessful in obtaining SSI benefits for Sandra. OCRA was originally informed that Sandra was denied SSI because of a joint bank account that her grandmother opened for her with about \$2,200 in it. SSA was claiming she was over the \$2,000 resource limit, even though Legal Aid and the regional center provided a bank statement showing the money had been withdrawn from this account before they applied for SSI benefits. OCRA contacted Sandra's grandmother to ask whether she could get a more recent bank statement showing this joint bank account was no longer open. OCRA then contacted the representative from SSA handling this matter who said the problem was not the bank account but rather some confusion regarding Sandra's payee. SSA had actually approved her SSI benefits and sent a letter to an SSI payee vendor to finalize the application process, but never heard back from them because they were not her payee at the time. SSA then closed Sandra's SSI claim. OCRA spoke with Sandra's service coordinator and discovered that the regional center was now her payee. OCRA then asked the SSA representative to reopen her claim and finalize her application because she now had an actual payee. After processing Sandra's claim, Sandra's SSI monthly benefits were approved retroactively going back almost two years. Sandra will receive a back payment with the regional center as her payee.

## **DEBT COLLECTION**

### **OCRA Protects Corrina's SSI Benefits from Debt Collectors.**

Debt collectors had been making constant harassing phone calls to Corrina, an SSI beneficiary, and even sued to collect an alleged debt. OCRA reviewed Corrina's case, researched the law, and sent a demand letter to the debt collector explaining that SSI benefits are protected from garnishment or reduction for purposes of debt collection. OCRA demanded they cease and desist any further collection activities. The debt collector ceased all contact with Corrina and the total debt was dismissed in court one month later.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **OCRA Helps Mary Get Her Job Back.**

Mary's mother called OCRA after her daughter was fired from her job at a spa. Mary allegedly had an argument with her co-workers and had been swiftly fired. Mary wanted her job back. Mary had a job coach for the first few months that she worked at the spa, but then the job coaching was discontinued. OCRA contacted the former job coaching agency and arranged for them to provide Mary with a new job coach. OCRA then called the general counsel for the spa and asked if they would consider reinstating Mary's job with additional supports. After a meeting with the employer, new job coach, and the family, the employer agreed to allow Mary to return to her job.

## **HOUSING**

### **Taylor Defeats Housing Discrimination.**

Taylor has Down syndrome and receives 24-hour care funded by the regional center. Taylor's mother purchased a condo, and after she closed escrow she was verbally told by the HOA Board that Taylor was prohibited from living in the condo because Taylor's diagnosis was a "risk." Taylor's mother requested, and was denied, a letter from the Board explaining the restriction, and how to appeal the Board's decision. OCRA worked with DRC's Legal Advocacy Unit attorneys with discrimination expertise to resolve this issue. The team quickly sent a letter to the Board President advising the Board about Taylor's right to live in the condo, Taylor's rights as an individual with a disability, and the Board's improper restriction, which

was made without providing proper notice and appeal rights. The letter requested that the Board review its decision to prohibit Taylor from living in the condo because of her Down syndrome. The attorney for the property agreed to the review and recommended the Board rescind its decision. The Board reconvened and approved Taylor living in the condo.

## **OUTREACH AND TRAINING**

### **Families and Teachers Learn About Alternatives to Conservatorship.**

Parents and family members of Sweetwater Union High School District students in South San Diego County recently learned about less restrictive alternatives to conservatorship at an annual training provided by OCRA. Approximately 100 people attended, filling the school district's largest meeting room, after a standing-room only crowd in a smaller room at last year's annual training. Families of high school and transition-age youth asked great questions and some left saying once they knew the alternatives available to them, they were confident they did not need a conservatorship. A few weeks later, OCRA provided a similar presentation to the district's high school and transition-age teachers of special education students with moderate to severe disabilities. The teachers learned about how to prepare students and their parents for the future without seeking conservatorship if it is not necessary. One teacher shared that he liked the presentation because it was presented in plain language that "a regular person" who is not a lawyer can understand.

### **Fiesta Educativa Annual Conference SSI Workshop.**

An energetic, motivated, and interactive group of Spanish-speaking parents attentively listened to OCRA's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) presentation in November 2017. Fiesta Educativa, Inc. invited OCRA to participate in their annual conference held at the California Endowment in Los Angeles. Fiesta Educativa Inc. hosted a fair with informational booths for parents of consumers to obtain information about special education and regional center services along with workshops. Perla Huizar, Clients' Rights Advocate from OCRA serving consumers of South Central Los Angeles Regional Center, participated in this event as a presenter for the SSI workshop. This opportunity allowed OCRA to meet about 20 parents of regional center consumers. OCRA trained parents using an SSI benefits PowerPoint presentation and guided parents to useful information in a Disability Rights California publication titled, "Public Benefits for People

with Disabilities.” Parents also learned about OCRA and took OCRA brochures. OCRA then met with 12 parents one-on-one after the presentation to discuss their specific questions.

## **PERSONAL AUTONOMY**

### **Maya Gets to Choose Someone Else to Manage Her Money.**

Maya contacted OCRA because her money manager reduced her weekly allowance from \$20 per week to \$10 per week. Maya wanted her monthly allowance restored and a new money manager. OCRA contacted Maya’s money manager and explained Maya’s concerns. The money manager agreed to restore Maya’s weekly allowance to \$20 and to let Maya choose a different person to help her manage her money.

## **REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION**

### **Lisa is Able to Remain in Her Home for the Holidays.**

Lisa contacted OCRA because the state’s Community Care Licensing (CCL) Division informed her that she would have to move immediately. CCL determined that her supported living services provider, which provided support in Lisa’s own home, was operating an unlicensed facility simply because Lisa needed help with taking her medication. OCRA worked closely with regional center case management to explain to CCL that the Lanterman Act permits Lisa to receive supported living services in her own home regardless of the severity of her disability or whether she needs help taking her medication. After speaking with the regional center and because of OCRA’s explanation of the law, CCL concluded that their original allegations were unfounded and that Lisa did not have to move.

### **Mitchell Gets a New Start.**

Mitchell was admitted to an IMD in mid-2017 under an unclear commitment status. His public defender was concerned that Mitchell was being held involuntarily, with no commitment order in place, and reached out to OCRA. Mitchell is a very good self-advocate, and just needed a little more self-confidence. OCRA staff stepped in to help boost Mitchell’s self-advocacy skills. Together, Mitchell and OCRA worked with the regional center and the public defender to find appropriate placement in the community. Mitchell has worked extremely hard to address the barriers to his community placement, and exceeded the expectations of his staff at the



IMD. Now, Mitchell is moving back into the community where he can continue to focus on his treatment, and move toward more independent living. Mitchell hopes to someday travel to Europe and find a job working with animals.

**Rachel Sees Her Family Years After Being Placed in an IMD Far Away from Her Home Community.**

Rachel has resided in an IMD for years due to significant behavior issues and the regional center's inability to find a group home willing to accept her. Rachel's home community is far from from the IMD. As such, she is unable to visit her family while receiving treatment in the IMD. She missed her family tremendously despite frequent phone calls with them. During this already difficult time in her life, Rachel got a serious illness. When OCRA learned that her family could not visit because they did not have the money to travel and her mother relied on her siblings to drive her around in an old car. OCRA investigated and learned from the regional center that Rachel had some personal money saved. Rachel agreed to gift the money to her family, so they can pay for travel to come visit her. The regional center assisted with making the necessary arrangements with the family. Rachel's family visited her right before her scheduled procedure. She was overjoyed to see her family after so many years.

**After Multiple Hospitalizations, Ron Successfully Transitions Back to the Community.**

OCRA has a long history of advocating for Ron to get appropriate services and supports for successful community living. Ron is a young man who was admitted to a restrictive setting with significant depression and after making multiple threats to harm himself or others. Before admission, Ron had resided in more than 10 placements in several psychiatric hospitals. Using a multidisciplinary approach to treatment and constant 1:1 supervision, DC staff to address Ron's depression and stabilize him. After almost one year, Ron learned coping skills, and reported feeling productive and valued. Today, Ron has successfully transitioned to a specialized residential facility in the community. OCRA staff last saw Ron when he had been in his new home for 60 days. Ron is considered a model resident and is exploring many new interests. He visited his family during the holidays, will be working and earning money, and has enrolled in an art class at the local community college.

### **Sylvia Goes from Crisis to Community.**

After almost a year of hospitalization, Sylvia was admitted to the acute crisis unit at a developmental center. Sylvia had been hospitalized due to severe head trauma from self-injurious behavior. Sylvia spent 306 days in the hospital when her previous home declined to take her back and the regional center could not find a community placement. Once Sylvia was at the developmental center, OCRA represented her at monthly meetings at the crisis unit and advocated for an appropriate home for her in the community. OCRA worked with the regional center to ensure her smooth transition back to the community. Sylvia now lives in an adult residential home with the supports and services that she needs. With careful planning and collaboration during the transition process, the home was prepared to address Sylvia's behavioral needs. The home is thrilled to have Sylvia's spunky attitude and sense of humor. More importantly, Sylvia is happy to be back in the community and enjoys doing activities such as shopping, attending costume parties, and reading.

### **Merle is Ready for Community Placement, But His Conservator is Not.**

OCRA reviewed Merle's comprehensive assessment and then visited him at a locked facility where he resided. OCRA was concerned that he was not living in the least restrictive environment. His IPP team agreed he was ready for community placement, but the author of his comprehensive assessment stated Merle wanted to stay in the locked facility. Wanting to understand Merle's concerns, OCRA's peer advocate went to the facility to talk to him. Merle immediately expressed his desire to live in the community. He wanted to live in a home in southern California where everyone helps each other. He also wanted to work in a grocery store stocking items. When asked if he wanted to stay in the locked facility, he asserted that his conservator opposed community placement. OCRA encouraged him to express his thoughts at his next IPP meeting. Merle agreed that is important, so everyone is on the same page. He requested OCRA's participation in his IPP meeting to support him in using his voice to advocate for community placement and OCRA is doing so.

## **REGIONAL CENTER – ELIGIBILITY**

### **OCRA Successfully Advocates Against Regional Center Termination.**

Six-year-old Jackie's family was devastated when the regional center sent a notice terminating her eligibility for services. Jackie had been a regional center client since age three. Jackie has many disabilities and needs. After reviewing voluminous regional center and other records, OCRA agreed to represent Jackie and her family at an informal meeting. OCRA hired an expert to review records, prepare a report, and attend the meeting via telephone. At the meeting, OCRA and Jackie's parents, aided by the expert's contributions, argued that she remains eligible under the Fifth Category since she has a condition similar to intellectual disability or a condition that requires similar treatment. The regional center agreed to cancel the hearing and Jackie continues as a consumer.

### **George Qualifies for Regional Center Services.**

George, a 28-year old man, was found sleeping outdoors and severely undernourished. He began to receive some assistance with housing from the non-profit organization that found him. With the aid of his support team, George applied for regional center services on the basis of his intellectual disability. The regional center denied George's application, finding that his intellectual disability was caused by long-term substance abuse. George appealed the regional center's denial of eligibility. OCRA reviewed George's regional center application file and identified problems in the regional center's evaluation. OCRA advised George and his support team on how to establish his regional center eligibility on appeal. Shortly before the scheduled hearing, the regional center reversed its position and determined that George is eligible for regional center services.

## **REGIONAL CENTER - SERVICES**

### **Client Obtains Adaptive Stroller When Case Settles Before Hearing.**

Isabella is a 9-year-old girl who requires an adaptive stroller to access the community. Her family's wheelchair-accessible van had broken down, so they relied heavily on her stroller to get to medical appointments in a standard sized car. The adaptive stroller worked well for her because it could be folded up and put into the trunk of a car, unlike her large power wheelchair, which could only be used with an adapted van. Unfortunately, Isabella had grown out of her adaptive stroller and funding for a new, larger

stroller had been denied by CCS and Medi-Cal. Isabella's mother requested that the regional center fund a new adaptive stroller as the payor of last resort. The family contacted OCRA after receiving a notice from the regional center denying the adaptive stroller. OCRA helped the family file a timely appeal and agreed to represent Isabella at a fair hearing. While preparing for the fair hearing, OCRA communicated with the regional center about Isabella's need for the stroller and the desire to informally resolve the issue. After OCRA met with the regional center and presented evidence of Isabella's needs, the regional center agreed to fund the adaptive stroller. Isabella can now easily access the community and her medical appointments.

### **Connor Gets Services and Supports So He Can Remain Independent.**

Connor and his wife relied on the help of friends to manage their shopping and travel arrangements. They had no Individual Program Plan (IPP) meetings for several years. They had not seen written IPPs and not signed any. Their service coordinator did not know or document their needs. OCRA directly represented Connor in an IPP meeting to insure that he and his wife received ongoing services and supports while asking the regional center to provide retroactive assistance. OCRA advocated for services not typically authorized so they would not miss out on their life goals based on the regional center's past inaction. The regional center agreed to provide supported living services for Connor and his wife so that they do not have to rely on their friends' help, including getting help to shop without going over budget. Connor is also getting assistance with returning to work. OCRA has met with the regional center to make sure IPP meetings are held regularly so other clients are not similarly impacted.

### **Patsy Gets her Own Apartment.**

Patsy wanted to move out of a high-level care home and into her own apartment. OCRA met with Patsy to confirm her support needs in the community. Despite her IPP team's disagreement, OCRA negotiated with the regional center to provide services and supports to overcome potential barriers to success for Patsy. Patsy was able to move into her own home with supports to help her be successful. Patsy now uses services and supports to help her live independently in the community.

### **Michael Gets Much-Needed Behavioral Support.**

Michael is a 27-year-old man whose goal is to obtain a college degree. He began to experience behavioral issues that prevented him from being allowed to participate in his college courses. Michael's doctor suggested additional behavioral therapy hours to help him develop better coping skills. Michael's behavioral therapy hours had recently been reduced by the regional center. OCRA helped Michael and his mother file for hearing and prepare for a mediation held before the hearing. After mediation, Michael's mother contacted OCRA because she wasn't sure about next steps. OCRA advised Michael's mother regarding preparation for a hearing if the regional center did not agree to fund the needed hours. Fortunately, the hours were approved and no hearing was necessary.

### **Alice Gets Compensatory Early Start Services.**

Alice was about to turn three years old, yet was not receiving her Early Start services, when her mother contacted OCRA. OCRA represented Alice at a meeting with the regional center and requested that they provide compensatory services for Alice beyond her third birthday to make up for the missed services. Following the IPP meeting, OCRA sent the regional center a letter with the legal argument for compensatory services past age three. OCRA also computed the compensatory hours for each therapy service that Alice had not been receiving. The regional center agreed to fund the compensatory services, which Alice will receive after her third birthday.

### **Akeem Gets Nursing Funded Retroactively From Regional Center.**

Akeem lives with his family and receives in-home nursing. The nursing agency told Akeem's family that his nursing was going to stop because there was no purchase of service in place with the regional center. Although the nurses had already worked many hours in the home, those services were not properly authorized and the family feared they would have to pay back that expense. OCRA represented Akeem at an IPP meeting with the regional center. The regional center understood the importance of the nursing services and agreed to authorize 189 hours retroactively and purchase hours going forward for Akeem's nursing needs.

### **Michelle Gets Increased Respite Hours.**

Michelle, a high school student, requires significant attention and supervision to stay safe. She has frequent toileting accidents which required her mother's assistance. She needs constant supervision and her mother has a difficult time getting everything done she needs to do and watching Michelle. Michelle's mother requested increased respite hours from her regional center service coordinator. The service coordinator denied the request and warned that Michelle's respite hours were actually being reduced. OCRA attended an IPP meeting with Michelle's mother. OCRA explained Michelle's high level of need and the great amount of time and energy needed to care for her. The service coordinator agreed to increase Michelle's respite to the maximum level possible.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **Emergency IEP Meeting Results in a Better Educational Environment.**

Johnny is a 5-year-old boy who attended a school for two years where he performed extremely well. His former classroom had 10 students with autism and three aids to help the teacher. During his transition IEP meeting, the school district convinced Johnny's mother to place him in a general education kindergarten classroom as a way to comply with the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirement. Once in general education, Johnny started eloping from the classroom every day and the teacher was not able to redirect him back into class. When Johnny's mother asked him why he was not staying in the classroom, he told her that it was too loud for him, so he went outside where it was quiet. OCRA represented Johnny at an emergency IEP meeting to discuss a change of placement. The IEP team agreed that the current general education classroom was not appropriate. The school district offered two options that Johnny's parents could consider. Johnny's parents visited both options to see which would be most appropriate for their son and chose the Behavior Intervention Class, which has at each class, 3 aids and 9 – 10 students.

### **Jake is Finally Found Eligible for Special Education.**

Jake's family and school teachers noticed early on that Jake was not engaging with others and not reaching milestones like children of a similar age. Jake had a special education assessment in pre-kindergarten, but he

was not found eligible for special education services. Jake's family requested another evaluation when Jake was in middle school, but the school did not do one. Jake continued to struggle in school, and at age 14, Jake was barely passing any of his classes. The family again requested a special education assessment. Jake's sister called OCRA for assistance with an IEP meeting for this regional center client. OCRA provided Jake's sister with tools and resources to advocate for her brother, such as asking that Jake's regional center assessment of autism be considered. The first IEP meeting was adjourned with no agreement. OCRA then provided more advice to the family. Jake's sister called OCRA after the second IEP meeting and reported that the IEP team worked together to find solutions to foster Jake's educational success. Jake was found eligible for special education services under the autism category. Jake was pleased because he will receive special education services in a regular education classroom, which is the least restrictive environment.

### **Jacob Receives Appropriate Special Education and Related Services.**

Jacob has been in an individualized transition program provided through a collaboration between the school district and his out of home placement provider. OCRA met with Jacob to plan for his upcoming IEP meeting. Jacob expressed that he would like to learn more sign language to be able communicate more effectively in the community. OCRA represented Jacob at his IEP meeting and secured goals and services in his IEP to learn more sign language skills. The collaboration between the school district and Jacob's placement has benefitted him and will continue under his current transition plan.

### **Robert Can Stay at His Old School.**

Robert had been attending a special day class at a school that he and his parents loved for two years and at which they expected to continue. Four days before the new school year started, Robert's father received a letter from the district saying he was being transferred to another school. After repeated unsuccessful attempts to contact the school and the district to discuss this sudden change, Robert's father contacted OCRA. OCRA contacted the district's Ombudsman, with whom OCRA staff have developed a good working relationship. The Ombudsman looked into the situation and learned that several other children also had to transfer. As a solution, the district decided to open a new classroom at the original school

and hired a new teacher. Robert, and the other students are now back at the original school.