

**Advocacy Report
July 2018 - December 2018**

All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

BENEFITS – IHSS

OCRA Helps James and Charles Get Protective Supervision.

James and Charles are brothers who live with their foster parents. They both have significant behaviors that require individual supervision throughout the day. In addition, James and Charles cannot eat, bathe, or dress independently. The county IHSS program denied them both protective supervision. The written denial stated that the foster care benefits were an alternative resource. OCRA asserted that the county was incorrect. The county agreed to conduct an initial assessment with the effective date going back to the initial date of application. OCRA requested and reviewed the boys' records, drafted evidence packets for them, and represented them at their initial assessments. The county then authorized James 283 hours per month and Charles 275 hours per month of IHSS. Because the benefits are retroactive, both boys' providers will receive approximately \$70,000 in back-payments.

OCRA Gets Daniel's IHSS Reinstated.

Daniel is a 29-year-old man who lives with his multi-generational family. Due to Daniel's preferences and intense support needs, only his family members can serve as his IHSS workers. His father is his primary worker, resulting in his father being unable to work away from the family home. Daniel prefers to stay home with his family and does not attend day program services outside of the home. After an IHSS reassessment with a new worker, his monthly hours were reduced from 267 to 255 per month. Daniel's father and sister immediately contacted OCRA for help. OCRA reviewed the notice and investigated the case facts. OCRA gathered evidence from Daniel's family, regional center, and physician. OCRA contacted the IHSS hearing representative to review the facts. After reviewing the assembled evidence, IHSS reinstated the monthly IHSS hours, even increasing the hours to 270 per month.

OCRA Helps Aaron Secure IHSS and Make Healthcare Choices.

Aaron has significant personal and healthcare needs, which require support services throughout his daily routines. To help him secure the support he needs, OCRA met with Aaron in his home to complete an IHSS application. Additionally, OCRA assisted Aaron with completing an Advance Healthcare Directive, which gives patients a voice in how they want to be cared for. Because Aaron wanted his mother to be his medical decision-maker, the directive empowered him to fulfill this wish. Aaron directed the entire process. He was also approved for IHSS.

Frank Obtains Protective Supervision.

Frank's mother contacted OCRA for help getting Frank protective supervision through the IHSS program. Frank had a strong case for protective supervision. For example, due to safety and behavioral concerns, Frank wears a helmet at all times. In addition, Frank mouths and chews toys, eyeglasses, and amplification devices. OCRA prepared Frank's mother for the in-home assessment, gathered and provided the IHSS social worker with an evidence packet supporting Frank's need for protective supervision, and advocated for Frank's needs at the assessment. Following the assessment, Frank received 283 hours of IHSS per month because he requires protective supervision to remain safely at home. This was an increase of over 159 hours with retroactive benefits totaling \$16,749.87.

BENEFITS – MEDI-CAL

Medi-Cal Will Accept Rubber Stamp As Patient Signature.

Tomas is a young man with cerebral palsy who requires collagen injections in his hands. Tomas wanted to use a stamp with his name on it or have his mother sign medical consent forms. One medical provider told Tomas a stamp signature could not be accepted because Medi-Cal would not accept it for billing purposes. At an IPP meeting, the regional center suggested having Tomas conserved by his mother so she could consent to medical procedures on his behalf. OCRA suggested a less restrictive alternative of an advance health care directive which would allow Tomas's mother to make medical decisions on his behalf without removing his rights and incurring the costly process of hiring an attorney and court fees. OCRA

also agreed to contact Medi-Cal to determine the process for requesting a reasonable accommodation for Tomas to use a stamp. Medi-Cal provided detailed instructions and forms for Tomas's family and physician to fill out so Tomas can either use his stamp or have his mother sign on his behalf. Medi-Cal also provided a phone number for Tomas's doctors to call if they have questions about billing procedures. A conservatorship was unnecessary. Tomas is now receiving the medical attention he needs at his discretion.

Sam Wins in Medi-Cal Share-of-Cost Case.

40-year-old Sam has been eligible for Social Security disabled adult child benefits for over 10 years and in the past, was also an SSI beneficiary. County Medi-Cal workers determined at least eight years ago that Sam was responsible for a large share of cost for his Medi-Cal services. Sam lost his IHSS because he could not afford the share of cost. For example, Sam could not visit a dentist because he could not afford the share of cost. Sam's support staff did not understand why he was charged a share of cost, or for how long, but the bills were piling on. They called OCRA for help. OCRA learned the county had erroneously determined that Sam was not eligible under any other program that would not charge him a share of cost. This error was caused because the county determined, incorrectly, that Sam had not simultaneously received Title II Social Security and Title XVI SSI benefits. The appeals specialist was not willing to engage in conversation regarding OCRA's analysis of Medi-Cal rules for a disabled adult child with no share of cost. The matter proceeded to hearing, where the appeals specialist continued to rely on the county determination. The judge determined that Sam is eligible for Medi-Cal with no share of cost and certain reimbursements must be made to Sam. Sam will now apply for IHSS, visit a dentist, and take a vacation.

BENEFITS – MEDICARE

Client's Wheelchair is Repaired after OCRA Intervenes.

Julia's family contacted OCRA because her power wheelchair was in disrepair and the Medicare Durable Medical Equipment (DME) provider assigned to fix the wheelchair did not complete the repairs for over two years. Julia had no way to get around and sometimes had to crawl around her home. Some days, she was unable to attend her day program because

the wheelchair did not work. The Medicare DME provider would schedule appointments to meet with Julia at her home and then never show up. OCRA became involved and asked for an IPP meeting with the regional center to discuss the issue. OCRA agreed to make a final attempt to work with the Medicare DME provider. If the provider still failed to repair the power wheelchair, OCRA would file a complaint. At the IPP meeting, OCRA also discussed the regional center funding the repairs as the payor of last resort. OCRA communicated with the DME provider and attended meetings to discuss the repairs needed for Julia's power wheelchair. When the DME provider failed to complete the repairs, OCRA filed a complaint with Medicare and requested the regional center complete the repairs as payor of last resort. The regional center agreed to pay for the repairs. Julia can finally use her power wheelchair and regularly attend her day program.

BENEFITS – SSDI

OCRA Helps Josie Get Her Social Security Benefits Back.

Josie came to OCRA after her Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits were terminated because she earned too much money. She filed an appeal, but had not heard from the Social Security Administration for several months. OCRA contacted Social Security, inquired about the status of her appeal, and asked if they requested information about costs that should have been deducted from Josie's countable income, such as impairment-related work expenses and work subsidies. Social Security acknowledged that they did not inquire about such costs and agreed to accept this information from OCRA. After submitting her deductible expenses, Josie's income fell below the earning limits. Because of this, she is now receiving her SSDI benefits again and received a lump sum back-payment of \$15,000.

BENEFITS – SSI

Kevin and John Keep Their SSI Benefits.

Kevin and John's mother called OCRA after receiving notices from Social Security stating they had an overpayment and were no longer eligible for SSI. She went to the local Social Security office multiple times asking for an explanation but the representatives were dismissive and unhelpful.

OCRA contacted Social Security twice, and received contradicting information each time. OCRA then contacted the office manager of the local Social Security office and asked for a supervisor to investigate these cases. The supervisor found it was their failure to enter the paystub information Kevin and John's mother submitted over the years that caused the overpayment. Social Security corrected the record and reinstated both boys' SSI benefits.

Marilyn gets \$250 per Month SSI Increase.

Marilyn received a notice stating her SSI benefits were being reduced by \$250 per month because she was not paying her fair share of the household expenses in the home she shared with other family members. Because Marilyn wanted to pay her share of the expenses if she had her full benefit, OCRA advised her SSI representative payee to appeal the reduction. OCRA advised the payee that if she wanted to loan the money to Marilyn, she could create a loan agreement with Marilyn to loan her the value of the shelter and food until SSI increased her benefit. The representative payee sent both the appeal request and loan agreement to the SSA office. Marilyn's SSI was increased to the full benefit amount of \$910.72 per month.

SSI Benefits are Restored and Representative Payee Changed After OCRA Files Abuse Report.

Kendrick contacted OCRA because his representative payee, a former friend, was keeping his SSI benefits. As a result, Kendrick was homeless and not able to afford housing. Kendrick agreed that OCRA could file an abuse report with Adult Protective Services (APS) since his representative payee was not properly managing his SSI benefits. After OCRA filed the report, APS and local law enforcement investigated the financial abuse. At the same time, OCRA asked Kendrick's regional center to change his representative payee to a vendored representative payee. OCRA advocated for the representative payee change to be expedited. Once Kendrick's representative payee was changed, he began receiving his SSI benefits. Kendrick is now working on his goal to move out of a homeless shelter and into more stable housing.

Regina Protects Her Future SSI Eligibility.

Regina has received SSI benefits for years as an adult. She received some confusing notices from Social Security, so her conservator went to the local Social Security office to resolve the issue. Regina's father had recently retired and began to collect his own Social Security benefits. Regina became eligible for Disabled Adult Child (DAC) benefits on her father's earnings record. With this new benefit, Regina would receive a higher total monthly benefit amount, but there was a question about her Medi-Cal eligibility. Unfortunately, after many long visits, Social Security told Regina's conservator to voluntarily terminate Regina's eligibility for SSI benefits. She agreed to do so, however, this could be a problem for Regina's financial and healthcare future. She was unsure if that was the correct action to take to resolve the issue. OCRA explained that voluntary termination of SSI was unnecessary. OCRA accompanied Regina's conservator to the Social Security office and successfully revoked the voluntary termination. Regina retained her SSI and Medi-Cal eligibility in addition to her new DAC benefits.

HOUSING

OCRA Helps Brothers File Housing Complaint Against Landlord.

Jordon and Jarrett are two brothers with autism who ran into a problem with their landlord. When the brothers tried to use their stove for the first time, it caught fire with flames shooting out of the stove burners. The brothers put out the fire, but were without a stove for several months. The brothers also discovered several flash burns inside the fuse box connected to the stove. The circuit breaker had blown. Although the brothers complained to their landlord in writing, they never received a response. OCRA coordinated with a regional center service provider to have an electrician look at the fuse box and the stove. The electrician determined the wiring for the stove is underrated for the wiring in the apartment and probably the rest of the building. The electrician offered to fix the issue, but the landlord refused. The landlord argued that only the blown fuse needed to be replaced. OCRA helped the brothers write a complaint to the housing department. A housing inspector came out to review the wiring and the stove. The inspector agreed with the electrician's findings and required the landlord to fix the wiring or replace the brothers' stove with one rated to the wiring already in their apartment.

Patricia Gets to Stay in her Home.

Patricia has lived in her subsidized Section 8 apartment for 40 years. Patricia's landlord issued a 90-day notice to vacate because he no longer wanted to participate in the Section 8 program and could charge someone else more for rent without accepting a Section 8 voucher. Patricia was receiving chemotherapy treatment for her recent cancer diagnosis at the time she received this notice. Patricia contacted OCRA asking for help. OCRA and the legal advocacy unit within Disability Rights California agreed to co-counsel on Patricia's case. They represented Patricia by requesting reasonable accommodations under the Fair Housing Act and state law from both Patricia's landlord and the Housing Authority. Patricia's advocacy team successfully negotiated with the Housing Authority to increase the total rent to the landlord to \$1,700 per month. Patricia's landlord then agreed to withdraw the 90-day notice to vacate and accept the new rent amount from the Housing Authority. Patricia will continue to live in her long-time apartment.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

PDC's Secure Treatment Residents Play Bingo with OCRA.

25 clients from the Secure Treatment Program at Porterville Developmental Center came to the recreation center for their monthly People First meeting. After attending to business, clients from two programs, along with their staff, joined OCRA in a rousing game of Clients' Rights Bingo. OCRA staff led participants in a discussion of their rights. Impressively, they were quick to share their rights and led their peers in a discussion of what those rights looked like. The right most important to the clients was the right to dignity. Although the meeting took place in the evening after a long day of work, everyone was excited to draw Bingo cards and discuss the rights they saw on the cards. PDC staff joined in, helping clients identify the pictures on their cards and shouting out "Bingo!" Many won Bingo prizes. Even after declaring their Bingo victories, winners continued to participate by discussing the rights and helping their peers identify the pictures on their Bingo cards. Participants also learned about the work of OCRA. Many lingered behind after the game to talk about how OCRA could help them and their peers. Since the game, several clients have contacted OCRA for assistance.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Client's Right to Spend Time with Friends and Family is Restored.

Ana contacted OCRA because the residential service provider at the group home where she lived was not letting her spend time alone with friends and family. The residential provider thought Ana had to be supervised during visits with friends and family. Ana could not independently socialize. When the provider told Ana she could not attend a family gathering at her aunt's house, Ana called OCRA for help. OCRA immediately called Ana's regional center and residential service provider, informed them of Ana's right to visit with family and friends alone, and explained that her recreational activities could not be restricted. OCRA also communicated with the regional center's quality assurance department and were prepared to file a Community Care Licensing complaint if Ana's rights continued to be denied. Ana's right to spend time with friends and family was immediately restored. She attended the family gathering at her aunt's house and looks forward to spending time alone with friends at the local mall.

REGIONAL CENTER – COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Louie Moves into the Community After 4 Years in a Locked Facility.

Louie is a young man who lived in an IMD since 2014. Louie wanted to leave the locked facility, but his regional center said he was not ready, based on the comprehensive assessment it completed. OCRA requested an updated assessment to be completed by an outside provider. The regional center agreed. The new comprehensive assessment indicated that Louie was ready for community placement, so the regional center started the referral process in 2015. It took a long time to find a provider willing to serve Louie. One provider agreed to work with Louie in a new group home it was developing. The IPP team would give Louie a discharge date, but the date kept changing because of licensing issues with the home. Louie became impatient because despite his excellent behavior, he was still in a locked facility. His team worked hard to encourage his continued excellent behavior. Louie finally moved out and is thriving in the community. Louie and his family are eager for him to become even more independent.

Specialty Group Homes Ease Transition from Developmental Centers to the Community.

OCRA toured a new type of group home that has opened in the northern California area. Enhanced Behavioral Support Homes are licensed adult residential facilities that are certified by the by the Department of Developmental Services. This model of care is for regional center consumers who have lived in developmental centers or have behavioral needs. One of these homes specializes in serving consumers with Pica who attempt to ingest inedible objects that can cause serious injury. After touring this group home, OCRA participated in the Behavior Support Team meetings for all four regional center consumers who moved into the home. The behavior support team had a productive discussion on clients' rights and what circumstances rise to the level of good cause to deny a client's rights. As a home specializing in serving consumers with Pica behavior, it was critical for the group home staff to understand that access to personal possessions cannot be denied without a clear finding of good cause due to imminent risk of harm to self or others, or property destruction. The team walked away with a clear understanding it must try all less restrictive alternatives before denying a consumer their right to access their personal possessions. Most important, OCRA found that all four consumers had successfully transitioned to their new home and all had a significant reduction in their challenging behaviors.

Peer Advocacy Helps Arthur Travel the Rocky Road to Placement.

Arthur is in a locked setting and wants to live in the community. OCRA attended an IPP meeting for Arthur where Arthur got upset when talking about his recent behaviors, which included property destruction, borrowing, lending or trading, intimidation of staff, and threats to run away. The IPP team did not let Arthur take a break during the meeting to calm down, but instead agreed to meet again in three months. The three months would give Arthur time to improve his behavior and plan his return to the community. OCRA strategized how to explain to Arthur that his behaviors influence his potential placement. OCRA wanted to help Arthur figure out what helps him stay calm, what is already in place to help him, and what he thinks would be helpful. Arthur's CRA decided to enlist the help of OCRA's Peer Advocate to help Arthur learn some self-advocacy strategies that would improve his behavior and better prepare him for his next meeting. The Peer Advocate wanted to learn about Arthur's interests, goals, and

behavior triggers in a person-centered planning approach. The Peer Advocate visited Arthur for three hours and brought a chess board to help ease into the conversation after learning of Arthur's interest in chess. Arthur said he would like to talk to his mother more consistently because he feels frustrated when he does not. He thinks the lack of communication with his mother causes his behavioral issues. OCRA staff then explained how his behaviors affect his potential placement. Arthur shared what he thought may help him stay calm like having more contact with family, frequent visitors, taking walks outside, regular communication with a staff member from his old unit, and attending anger management classes again. OCRA advocated for the facility to include these strategies in his daily routine and encouraged Arthur to take each day as a new day. Arthur's behaviors have significantly improved and he is now on track for placement.

Lily Will Have a Community Placement for Her 18th Birthday.

Lily had been at an IMD for over a year at age 17. OCRA first met Lily at the IPP meeting that followed her annual comprehensive assessment. The assessment team and staff at the IMD agreed that Lily had improved greatly and was ready for community placement. Unfortunately, the lack of group homes in the state rendered it difficult to locate a group home that would accept someone Lily's age for permanent placement. Lily was frustrated at the regional center for not locating an appropriate group home either for her as a minor or an adult group home for after she turns 18. OCRA stepped in to advocate and asked the regional center to send referral packets to adult residential facilities before Lily turns 18 so a community placement will be available the day she reaches adulthood. Several weeks before her birthday, Lily had a meet-and-greet with a provider who quickly determined that Lily would do well in their home. At the meeting, OCRA strongly advocated for advanced cross-training to begin soon. The IMD, the provider and the regional center agreed to meet to discuss dates. Lily will begin cross-training after her final dependency court appearance and will be ready to transition to the community once she turns 18.

Cesar is Back in the Community.

Despite completing his sentence for a minor offense, Cesar was kept in jail because the regional center could not find placement for him. Cesar's

public defender contacted OCRA for assistance. OCRA met with Cesar and learned his placement wishes. OCRA scheduled an IPP meeting and worked with the regional center service coordinator, his public defender, and group home staff to discuss Cesar's wishes and needs. Cesar wanted to be released from detention before his upcoming birthday. OCRA advanced placement discussions and secured a group home placement by the end of the meeting. OCRA secured additional services including a day program, peer support program, and assistance with retrieving personal items. Cesar was released from jail before his birthday and is now living in the community. He is learning valuable work skills at his day program.

Elijah Gets a New Device to Communicate with His Staff.

Elijah has been living in a developmental center for nearly 20 years, and is now preparing to transition into the community. Elijah is deaf and does not read or write, so he sometimes struggles to communicate with his staff and peers who are hearing. Elijah does not mind taking the time to teach his staff some sign. In fact, Elijah often teaches his CRA some sign too. However, when he really needs to communicate and no interpreter is available, it can be a struggle. OCRA requested an assistive technology assessment several times for Elijah. The developmental center has now provided Elijah with a tablet that allows a hearing person to type a message, and an app will finger spell the message to Elijah. Elijah is able to use the technology to communicate with hearing staff and peers when there is no sign language interpreter present. Elijah continues to educate his staff while OCRA continues working hard to ensure Elijah will have access to staff fluent in sign language in his new home.

Oscar Moves into the Community.

Oscar had been placed in a crisis home because his behaviors escalated. After a year, the regional center determined it could not provide services to stabilize Oscar at the crisis home, so he was admitted into an IMD far from his home. This was difficult for Oscar and his family because they could not visit him as much as they wanted. When Oscar did not show signs of improvement during his stay at the IMD, the regional center decided he could receive the services he needed in the acute crisis unit at a developmental center. OCRA attended regular meetings to advocate for supports and services to help Arthur get better and to move back into his home community. Oscar showed significant signs of improvement, which

transformed his demeanor. Oscar attended his regular meetings and participated with the team to provide regular updates on his progress. Oscar used his words to explain to his staff when he was feeling anxious or uncomfortable instead of becoming physically aggressive. Oscar stayed busy as he worked doing janitorial work and delivering mail, which earned him his own money. Oscar also went on outings with this staff to places like Taco Bell and Target. The regional center and a vendor began to develop an Enhanced Behavioral Support Home for Oscar, but the home was not ready before Oscar's discharge date from the acute crisis unit. The regional center agreed to rent a home for Oscar to transition into until the behavioral home can be completed. During the months leading to his discharge, staff members engaged in cross-training with Oscar to help make him feel comfortable before moving back into the community. Oscar liked working with them. Oscar is now doing well at his rental home. He enjoys spending time with his family members who visit him regularly.

REGIONAL CENTER – ELIGIBILITY

Apollo Gets a Regional Center Evaluation.

Apollo lived with her foster mother for most of her life. Her foster mother noticed Apollo was academically several grade levels behind her peers and she struggled socially. Apollo's foster mother attempted to get regional center services. After almost a year of waiting, Apollo fell even further behind her peers. OCRA contacted the regional center intake department on Apollo's behalf and requested initiation of the application process. The regional center agreed to expedite the application process and conduct a psychological evaluation.

OCRA Helps Multiple Clients Obtain Regional Center Eligibility.

Over a several month period, Jenny, Matilda, Bob, and Francisco each separately approached OCRA for help to obtain regional center eligibility. In each case, OCRA agreed to review documentation and recommend additional testing or evidence needed. OCRA reviewed records from many sources for each client. OCRA also helped each person understand his or her legal arguments and spoke with the regional_center intake team to advocate for eligibility. As a result, Jenny, Matilda, Bob, and Francisco are now eligible for regional center services.

REGIONAL CENTER – SERVICES

Hannah Gets Early Start Services After Delay.

Hannah is a toddler found to need Early Start services. The regional center authorized Hannah to receive occupational and speech therapy. No one contacted Hannah's mother to set up a service start date. Months passed with no services. Hannah's mother found her way to OCRA. OCRA contacted Hannah's service coordinator and requested the authorized services start immediately. Within two weeks, both services began.

Becky Succeeds at Her Regional Center Fair Hearing.

The regional center was funding pads and wipes for Becky but determined they would no longer do so and terminated this funding. OCRA provided Becky's mother with counsel and advice regarding the regional center fair hearing process. OCRA also advised Becky's mother about her request for reimbursement of her out-of-pocket cost for the wipes and pads. OCRA explained the appeal process and timelines. Becky's mother told OCRA that because of the on-point counsel and advice, she reached a successful agreement to Becky's appeal at mediation.

Mary Receives Her IPP in Spanish After Waiting for Six Months.

Mary's mother, who is monolingual Spanish-speaking, contacted OCRA because the regional center failed to provide her with a translated copy of Mary's Individualized Program Plan (IPP), and its addendum, after her January 2018 IPP meeting. Mary's mother made multiple requests for the translated document. OCRA contacted the regional center's case management team, including a director, to discuss the regional center's failure to provide the translated IPP within 45 days of the meeting as required by law. Because of OCRA's involvement, approximately six months after her first request, Mary's mother finally received the translated IPP and addendum for her review.

Amy's Dental Expenses are Partially Reimbursed by Regional Center.

Amy is a minor with cerebral palsy. She has a partially obstructed airway and the lateral movement of her tongue is limited, which causes food to remain in her mouth. Amy's dental issues increase her risk of gingivitis.

Amy needs deep cleaning more often than other people and needs general anesthesia during dental work. Amy's mother asked the regional center for specific referrals, but they gave her a list of Denti-Cal providers. She called many on the list, but they either said they cannot provide services to patients with Amy's needs or had a long waiting list. Amy's need for dental work grew more urgent as the days passed. She also needed her impacted wisdom teeth to be extracted. Since the regional center's list did not lead to a viable service, Amy's mother contacted a dentist that she had previously seen, and he performed all of Amy's dental work. Amy's mother paid to cover the dental work. After the dental work was performed, Amy's mother contacted the regional center to request reimbursement. The request was denied. Amy's mother appealed and called OCRA for help to prepare for the hearing. The regional center contended that she had not kept them informed about the situation and prevented them from finding a generic resource to cover the services. Amy's mother alleged her actions were reasonable and the specialized dental work was related to Amy's developmental disability. After the hearing, the judge awarded Amy and her family a reimbursement for dental expenses related to her disability, a portion of the total cost. Amy's mother was pleased to have been able to successfully advocate for her daughter.

Juanito's Parents Advocate for Respite.

Juanito's parents contacted OCRA because they were no longer receiving respite support. The regional center told Juanito's parents he required a licensed vocational nurse (LVN) to provide the respite because he used a gastrostomy tube to eat and take medication. The regional center also said the LVN required the family's assistance to provide care. The family did not agree with this arrangement because they effectively could not benefit from respite which is supposed to give them a break from caregiving. OCRA reviewed Juanito's nursing assessment and saw no indication that a nurse must provide his respite. OCRA recommended that Juanito's parents request an IPP meeting to determine why a nurse was being required. OCRA provided Juanito's parents with a sample letter on how to request an IPP meeting. OCRA recommended that Juanito's parents obtain letters from doctors supporting their opinion that Juanito did not require a LVN. OCRA then prepared Juanito's parents for the IPP meeting so they could effectively advocate for the services Juanito needs.

Patty Gets Transportation Assistance from Regional Center.

Patty lives in her own apartment. Everyone goes to Patty if they need food, furniture, a resource, counseling, or just a friend. Patty utilizes public transportation usually, and dial-a-ride when the public transportation is not available. She has had this routine for 11 years. Patty called her new service coordinator and requested dial-a-ride tickets. She received a denial notice of action. Her regional center told her she had to choose between the two types of transportation because they would only fund one. Patty contacted OCRA for help with her appeal. OCRA worked with Patty to submit her appeal on time and gathered facts about her transportation use. One week before Patty's informal meeting, the regional center called and asked for an Interdisciplinary Team meeting to resolve the issue. With Patty's excellent self-advocacy skills and OCRA's support, the regional center agreed to fund both types of transportation for Patty.

Neil Rests Easier after His Home Gets a Makeover.

Neil lives in a Supported Living Services (SLS) home. Neil's father called OCRA to say Neil needed a new bed. The regional center is Neil's representative payee for his SSI benefits, so requests like this go through his service coordinator. All of Neil's housemates received a new bed after a recent bed bug infestation, but Neil's service coordinator said his mattress is only a year old and still good. When OCRA visited Neil, the home was dirty, there were holes in the walls, and there was a three-legged dining table in the kitchen with seating for one person – a rolling office chair. The living room had a rectangular table pushed to the corner and a dirty bucket sofa. The curtains were soiled and falling off the hooks. The dishwasher did not work. The home's condition was so atrocious that Neil's staff did not sit on the furniture or stay in the house overnight. For example, Neil's 1:1 staff stayed in her mobile home parked on the side of the house. OCRA filed an abuse report and contacted the regional center to investigate and remediate the living situation. The regional center met with the SLS provider and they agreed to make repairs, provide adequate furniture, and clean the house. The regional center confirmed to OCRA there were no bed bugs in the home, repairs were complete, and the inside has a fresh coat of paint. Neil's home now has a nice sectional sofa in the living room with new draperies on the window. There is a new dining table with adequate seating. Neil's room has new curtains and a new bed.

OCRA Helps Ralph Move Back to California.

Ralph was born in California, but when he was six years old, his family moved out of state. Now an adult, Ralph was living in a residential facility in Texas. Ralph's family is moving back to California, and they asked for help to make sure Ralph's services continue when he moves to California. OCRA confirmed with the regional center that Ralph was eligible for services when he was a child. The regional center agreed to bypass the 120-day eligibility determination timeline and open a new file for him right away. Although Ralph is not in California yet, OCRA is coordinating with the regional center and the family to prepare for his arrival. The regional center referred Ralph's family to potential residential homes and agreed to assign a case manager to secure Ralph's home placement when he arrives back in California. Ralph's mother is visiting care facilities in California, and Ralph will be traveling home with her as soon as they find a placement close to family.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

OCRA Successfully Advocates for a 1:1 Aide for Student.

Guillermo was transitioning to high school. His parent had kept Guillermo home much of the previous year, frustrated by the lack of services offered by the school. This year, his parent pressed for the services and supports he needed to attend school. Guillermo has substantial personal care needs and some medical needs. He is not safe at school and cannot access his education without appropriate services. OCRA gathered and reviewed records and communicated with the family, the regional center, the school district, and the district's attorney. OCRA represented Guillermo at two IEP team meetings. OCRA and Guillermo's parent successfully advocated for a solution that allows Guillermo to attend his new school. The district agreed to provide a 1:1 aide all day at school and during transportation to and from school.

Bill Will Receive Trained Nursing Care at School.

Bill's mother contacted OCRA for help because he needed related services at school, including nursing for suctioning and administering medications. OCRA provided direct representation at IEP team meetings and filed a California Department of Education (CDE) Compliance Complaint on Bill's behalf. CDE found the district out of compliance in many allegations:

failure to demonstrate staff are properly trained to meet Bill's care needs; failure to provide Bill's mother with proper notice and Bill with a proper nursing assessment; and failure to complete the triennial health report and provide Bill's mother with a copy. CDE ordered the district to provide evidence they have properly trained their staff to work with Bill and fund an independent nursing assessment. The district agreed to provide Bill with a licensed vocational nurse at school until they could provide CDE with proof that the staff is appropriately trained. The district also agreed to make a referral to the School for the Blind to assess Bill.

Johnny Gets One More Year for Academics in High School.

Johnny and his mother contacted OCRA for help maintaining his placement for the upcoming school year. Johnny wanted to remain at his current high school placement for one more academic year instead of entering the district-mandated transition program. Johnny is doing well in his high school and is excelling in meeting the academic goals and objectives in his IEP. Johnny and his mother, who is also his conservator, had several concerns about the district's transition program and did not believe it was an appropriate placement for him. Johnny wanted to continue working on his academic skills rather than focusing solely on independent living skills, which is what the district's transition program offers. Initially, the school district was standing firm with their offer of placement into their transition program. OCRA represented Johnny at several IEP meetings where the team discussed IEP goals, academics, and transition services. OCRA negotiated a settlement with the school district that allowed Johnny to remain in his current high school placement for another academic school year.

Sofia Obtains a School Transfer.

Sofia's mother, a monolingual Spanish-speaker who cannot read or write, contacted OCRA when Sofia's school suspended her multiple times. She was having trouble communicating with Sofia's school about her suspensions and the services Sofia needed to avoid suspensions. OCRA agreed to review Sofia's school records to determine what services her mother should request and whether the suspensions formed a change of placement or expulsion. While they did not rise to a change of placement or expulsion, OCRA did meet with Sofia's mother to review the IEP process

with her, such as how to request services and a behavioral assessment and intervention plan. Further, OCRA drafted a request for an IEP meeting and a behavior assessment for Sofia. Sofia's mother became an informed parent-advocate. She attended the IEP meeting on her own and discussed services she would like for her daughter. She secured a transfer for Sofia, a special day classroom, and a music class.

Crystal Gets a New 1:1 Aide at School.

Crystal's parents contacted OCRA, concerned about their 8-year-old's well-being at school. Crystal had a 1:1 aide at school. One of Crystal's mother's concerns was that the aide programmed her feeding machine incorrectly at least once, which caused Crystal to be fed too rapidly and placed her in danger of vomiting. Crystal's mother also noticed that the aide could not lift Crystal during transfer to and from her wheelchair or gait trainer. She also observed the aide having difficulty lifting Crystal's legs while changing her diaper. One of the most significant concerns was when Crystal's mother observed that the aide placed Crystal's oxygen cannula incorrectly during Crystal's hour-long bus ride home, which put Crystal's health in serious danger. OCRA attended the IEP meeting with Crystal's parents. OCRA provided examples of how the 1:1 aide's physical limitations and errors affected the care Crystal received. The following week, the district changed Crystal's 1:1 aide so she now receives appropriate care while at school.

TRANSPORTATION

Diane No Longer Waits Two Hours for Access Paratransit.

Diane's mother contacted OCRA seeking assistance with Paratransit services. Diane needs transportation services to attend work and go into the community. Paratransit would often pick her up from her board and care facility one to two hours late. As a result, she was at risk of losing her job. OCRA spoke with Paratransit management. Paratransit now picks up Denise on time and she is no longer late for work.