



Dialogue

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From the Executive Director

Projected State Deficit Could Affect Services for People with Developmental Disabilities

By Bill Bowman



If you have been reading the newspaper lately, you undoubtedly have seen the projections that California's budget deficit is

likely to rise to some \$4 billion by the end of the current fiscal year with shortfalls in the area of \$12 billion predicted for 2002-2003. It is difficult to comprehend such a possibility and what it would entail for life in California.

We do know that the stock market downturn of the past several months adversely affected the wealth of many Californians, which then reduced tax revenues for the state. Add to that fundamental challenge the state energy crisis and the negative effects of the September 11 tragedy, and we have a real budgetary problem, the extent of which we don't yet know. We also won't know the potential impact this will have on services for people with developmental disabilities until the Governor issues his proposed budget around January 10. Once we do see the Governor's budget, we will release a special edition of *Dialogue* that will address the issues affecting people with developmental disabilities and any actions that we all need to take.

Apart from the state budgetary challenges, the Regional Center of

Orange County is already anticipating a purchase of service deficit by the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2002) of somewhere between \$3 million and \$6 million. That projection is based on growth — new people entering the system — and the increase in service needs. Additionally, the leadership team at RCOC is running the same drills that state staff has been asked to run — where would we reduce costs if we had to cut our budget by three percent, five percent or 10 percent? We are also meeting with service providers to discuss the impact of those drills on them. What are their contingency plans? What is the current fiscal health of their organizations? With such large negative numbers foreseen in both the state and RCOC, it is difficult to imagine that there will be adequate resources to meet the demand for services in the future.

Why am I writing all this seeming doom and gloom? I don't want to convey the impression that "the sky is falling," but I do want you to be aware of the very real potential for cutbacks in funding, and therefore, possible cutbacks in services provided to people with disabilities. Once the state administration has a better handle on its resources and releases the proposed budget, we at RCOC will look closely at how that impacts what we do. We need to ensure that every single service is provided in the most effective and efficient way

possible and that people are realizing the best possible benefit from the very precious resources we have.

Another point I want to make is how critical the network of community collaborations we have built in the past several years is to the success of the people that we serve. As you read *Dialogue*, please note the web of partnerships inherent in the UCI clinic data, the community watch line, the family and caregiver training, and safety education classes. These types of activities provide vital support to families and those with disabilities that they love.

The bottom line is that life as we know it may change, but we can survive by focusing on a new way of seeing the world. By that I mean expanding the horizon of people with disabilities beyond the regional center and its vendor partners to a broader spectrum of connections in the community. Making real connections to others in the community who learn to care about them is critical to those we serve. All of our lives are sustained and enabled by such connections and relationships. Whatever happens to the state budget, those we serve, and those who love and support them will make it through the challenge. We'll keep the light on; won't you?

Bill Bowman's column normally appears on page 3, but in light of the critical nature of his message, it appears on page 1 of this issue.

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Project GET SAFE Teaches Personal Safety to Consumers

Project GET SAFE is a non-profit organization headed by Stuart Haskin, also known as "Safety Stu". (See "Safety Stu's Corner" on page 5.) Stu and his staff offer personal empowerment and safety education as well as some self-defense to people with developmental disabilities to help them better protect themselves.

The Regional Center of Orange County is offering FREE safety training classes to all RCOC consumers. Class topics include personal safety at home and in the community, some basic self-defense moves, who

to contact in case of emergency, what constitutes an emergency, and other topics related to personal safety. Classes start in December 2001; see class schedule on page 10.

If you have questions about the safety training classes, please call

your service coordinator or Lisa Amin-Desai, Regional Center's supported and independent living coordinator, at (714) 796-5202.

To register for an upcoming class, please contact Eva Lodge at (714) 796-5251 or Emily Tactay at (714) 796-5248.

Transportation will not be coordinated or provided by RCOC, and consumers who need support aides will be responsible for bringing their own. Registration is limited to RCOC consumers only, and class size will be limited to a maximum of 15 people.



Board of Directors Creates a Legislative Committee

By Holly Nogales, vice president, RCOC board of directors

"I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it." Henry David Thoreau

For the Regional Center of Orange County, one step toward a better government — one responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and their families — is the RCOC Board of Directors Legislative Committee. Members include Holly Nogales, Karen Chen, Nancy Creelman, Patty Daley and Kim Vuong. The Legislative Committee aims to achieve several objectives. One of our primary goals is to build relationships with our local legislators, resulting in a foundation for coalitions and collaboration with the individuals who influence the laws affecting our consumers and families. Building these relationships is especially crucial at this time of fiscal uncertainty (see Bill Bowman's article on page 1 for background on California's looming budget crisis and how it could affect services to consumers). You can help us in our effort by making contact with your local legislators and the Governor to let them know of your concerns and your expectation that they will be looking out for the interests of people with developmental disabilities. You can find a list of the state senators and assemblymembers who represent Orange County on this page.

Another thing the Legislative Committee hopes to do is promote greater participation in the legislative Grassroots Day of the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA). Grassroots Day is an effective and fun day in April spent at the Capitol in

Sacramento advocating for the needs of consumers, their families, and organizations that serve the disabled.

Finally, to successfully mobilize the power of RCOC consumers and families, the committee will need to analyze pending legislation, organize letter-writing campaigns and provide information with the help of the *Dialogue* newsletter. So look for future articles in *Dialogue* where we hope to inform and educate — and in so doing, to advocate.

How to Reach Your Elected State Representatives

Below is a list of the state senators and assemblymembers who represent Orange County. If you do not know who represents you, you can find out on the Internet at www.leginfo.ca.gov or by calling the Registrar of Voters at (714) 567-7600. If you want to find your legislators on the leginfo Web site, scroll down the page and click on the button that reads, "Your Legislature," then enter your zip code, or click on "Assemblymembers' Home Pages" and "Senators' Home Pages." Some zip codes encompass more than one district, so you have to enter your full address on the Senate and Assembly home pages to identify your legislator.

State Senators

Dick Ackerman, District 33
17821 E. 17th Street, Suite 180
Tustin, CA 92780
(714) 573-1853

Joseph Dunn, District 34
12397 Lewis Street, Suite 103
Garden Grove, CA 92840
(714) 705-1580

Bill Morrow, District 38
27126-A Paseo Espada, #1621
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
(949) 489-9838

Ross Johnson, District 35
18552 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 395
Irvine, CA 92612
(949) 833-0180

Assemblymembers

Patricia Bates, District 73
30012 Ivy Glenn Drive, Suite 120
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
(949) 495-0730

Bill Campbell, District 71
1940 N. Tustin St., Suite 102
Orange, CA 92865
(714) 998-0980

John Campbell, District 70
18952 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 220
Irvine, CA 92612
(949) 863-7070

Lou Correa, District 69
Rancho Santiago Community College
2323 N. Broadway, Suite 225
Santa Ana, CA 92706
(714) 285-0355

Lynn Daucher, District 72
305 N. Harbor Blvd., Suite 303
Fullerton, CA 92832
(714) 525-0175

Thomas Harman, District 67
16052 Beach Blvd, Suite 160
Huntington Beach, CA 92647
(714) 843-4966

Ken Maddox, District 68
12865 Main Street, Suite 100
Garden Grove, CA 92840
(714) 638-1393

R.A.D.D. Review

Tele-Friends Want to Meet You!

Tele-Friend helps consumers meet other consumers. We suggest that you always meet in a public place and that you provide your own transportation. To place an ad in Tele-Friend, call (714) 796-5270 for the form you need. Here are some people interested in making "Tele-Friends."

Daniel of Anaheim ... (Age 27) "I like to listen to music and watch movies and I also like to cook. I like to ride my bike, lift weights, and go swimming, bowling, and fishing. I like to go to amusement parks and walk on the beach. I work in customer service in the hardware department at Home Depot."

John of Anaheim ... "I like the movies, Disneyland, watching TV, and playing video games. I am 40 years old. I work at a movie theater. I have a car and a driver's license."

Aaron of Anaheim ... (Age 24) "I like to listen to music such as Britney Spears, N-Sync and Backstreet Boys. I

like to go on the Internet on my computer. I like to swim, ride my bike, act, and take pictures. I like to clean my apartment and hang out with friends. I work in maintenance at Disneyland."

Gary of Costa Mesa ... (Age 30) "I enjoy listening to music, I love going out and having fun with friends and family. I work as a box boy at Ralphs. I don't drive, but I'm looking for some fun on my bike. I'm a clean, radical dude that needs to meet friends."

Beth of Dana Point ... (Age 40) "I like listening to music, watching good movies, making crafts by hand, and wrapping presents for friends. I work assembling articles for businesses to sell. Tinkerbell – that's me! I'd like to put a jingle into your life, so why not call me. You'll be glad you did."

Joel of Huntington Beach (Age 24) "I like to sing, watch movies, take care of my room, go to theme parks, go to parties, go bowling, and

meet new friends. I am looking for a girlfriend. I work at Pic-N-Save and live at home with my parents."

Steven of La Habra ... (Age 23) "I like to watch movies, listen to music, cook, talk on the phone, or chat on AOL. I also like dancing, going to malls and movies, and meeting new people (especially girls under 30). I also like going to amusement parks like Knott's Berry Farm and Disneyland. I live in an apartment and have a roommate."

Dennis of Yorba Linda ... "I like to watch baseball and basketball. I like talking on the phone. I like to go bowling. I like to watch videos on TV. I am 43 years old and work at Taco Bell. I drive and have my own car."

If you would like to talk to any of the people listed above, call (714) 796-5270. We will send you a roster of RCOC consumers who have placed ads. You must be a Regional Center consumer or parent to respond.

Consumer Advisory Team Update

By Sam Durbin, president



In my last *Dialogue* column, I wrote about Assembly Bill 896 that would make

the system of services for people with developmental disabilities better by combining the regional center and state institution budgets. In August some CAT members and some RCOC board members and staff attended a hearing in Sacramento to tell the state legislators why we think it is very important to pass this bill. It was good to have that chance to express our viewpoint, but no decision was made and the bill was put on hold until January.

The car wash fund-raiser we held on September 8 at Orange County ARC in Anaheim was a lot of fun and a great success. We had music and water fights, a dunk tank and – oh yeah – we washed some cars. We raised \$425 after expenses.

Which brings me to the reason that we held the car wash. The Consumer Advisory Team sponsored a self-deter-

mination workshop for consumers on December 7 at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge. Presentations included “Joe’s Journey: From Institutionalization to Inclusion” by Joe Argueta from Marin County, California; “My Supported Life” by Chris Dixon, San Diego County; and “We’re Really Not That Different, After All” by me. I want to thank Larry Landauer, director of consumer and community resources at RCOC, his assistant Betty Bath, and Juda Carter, training and standards coordinator, for their support and help with this conference.

The next CAT meeting will be Wednesday, January 9 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Please call Betty Bath at (714) 796-5263 for the location and to make a reservation. The meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. but the location varies.



CAT members washing cars on September 8.

Safety Stu’s Corner

Safety Lesson: The Buddy System

Hi Safety Friends — I’m Safety Stu. In today’s Safety Corner, you’ll learn about the **Buddy System**.



The Buddy System is when you take a friend with you wherever you go. I take my buddy to the movies, the park, the video store, and — you might think this is funny — I even take my buddy to the restroom with me. I would rather be safe knowing my buddy is with me than be left alone.

When you have a buddy, you can help each other if something happens to one of you. For example, if your buddy gets hurt or lost, you can go get help. It will be faster and safer than if you stay with your buddy.

Another important part of the Buddy System is the **Safety Check**. Whether you’re going grocery shopping, for a walk outside, or to check out the latest videos — always tell someone you trust where you are going or leave that person a note. With the Safety Check, if something unexpected happens, the person you trust will know where you went.

Well, Safety Friends, there’s safety in numbers — it’s cool to be safe. Always remember to use the Buddy System and Safety Check.

If you have any safety questions, write to me at:

Safety Stu
c/o Regional Center of Orange County
P.O. Box 22010
Santa Ana, CA 92702

If I use your question in Safety Stu’s corner, I will send you a safety T-shirt, absolutely free.

Parent/ Support Groups *Grupos para Padres*

For meeting times and locations, see the monthly RCOC Community Calendar that comes in the mail to you, or call the group contact or Jacqui Kerze at RCOC, (714) 796-5299.

- ❖ **A Touch of Love** - For limb deficient children and their families. (800) 493-5462. Hablamos español
- ❖ **Ain't Misbehavin'** - A support network of parents interested in exchanging information on behavioral issues. Call (714) 889-7260
- ❖ **Asperger Syndrome** - Contact Caroline Wilson, (562) 425-2292 or South County call (949) 454-6302
- ❖ **Autism Support Groups** - Huntington Beach area, contact Leaza Howe, (714) 841-6766; North County, contact Paula Peterson, (714) 288-9005; South County, contact Beverly Lee, (949) 249-9277; Newly diagnosed autism, contact (310) 543-0662 (Long Beach area)
- ❖ **Cerebral Palsy** - For info. & support, meetings & groups, contact Family Support Services at UCPA, (714) 557-1291
- ❖ **Chinese Parent Support Group for the Disabled** - Contact Kitty Tsan at (949) 588-0123
- ❖ **Circle of Support** - A monthly meeting for consumers, parents and assistants. Contact Gary and Claudia Eien, (714) 648-4185
- ❖ **CLASP (California League of Angelman Syndrome Parents)** - Contact Katie Hendren, (714) 962-4152
- ❖ **Compassionate Friends** - For parents who have experienced the loss of a child. Call Roy Redman, (714) 993-6708
- ❖ **DADS' Group** - For fathers of children with autism and related disorders. Call Norm Booth, (714) 961-1315
- ❖ **Family Visions** - For parents of visually impaired children. Contact Karin Crilly, (714) 573-8880, ext. 109
- ❖ **Fathers Support Network** - Contact Jeff Braun at the Family Support Network, (714) 543-7600
- ❖ **First Evangelical Free Church Disabilities Ministry** - Contact Connie Hutchinson, (714) 529-5544
- ❖ **Fragile X Group** - For parents or family members of people with Fragile X. Contact Sali Farber at (714) 544-9551
- ❖ **Friendship Ministries** - Christian group at Orange County Worship Center for teenagers and adults with developmental disabilities; call the church at (714) 547-9631
- ❖ **Guys and Gals Group** - A recreational group for adult consumers. Contact Lena Lynch, (714) 796-5213 or Jacqui Kerze, (714) 796-5299
- ❖ **Hearts United Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (HUG)** - Contact Irene Kontz, (714) 636-5430
- ❖ **Mitochondrial Disease Group** - Call Sherry Clitheroe, (714) 968-9373 or Lissa Mirand, (562) 920-9981
- ❖ **Mom's Group** - For moms of children with autism in North Orange County. Contact Jill Riley, (714) 288-1566
- ❖ **Moving on at 3 Parent Group** - To support and educate parents of children transitioning from Early Start services. Contact RCOC's John Zeimantz at (714) 796-5339
- ❖ **Non-Ketotic Hyperglycinemia (NKH) Family Support Group** - Contact Tammy L. Hanna (714) 444-4454
- ❖ **One In A Million Kids** - For parents of children with rare or undiagnosed disorders. Call Georgia or Gary Freedman-Harvey, (310) 588-2562 – not a support group but does assist over the phone
- ❖ **Orange County Parents of Disabled Multiples** - Contact Bree Dennis at (909) 734-3616
- ❖ **Parent Connection** - To connect with other parents of RCOC consumers (Eng., Spanish & Vietnamese), call (888) FRC-BABY
- ❖ **Parents of Kids with Epilepsy** - A support group. Contact Mary Repp at (949) 462-1927
- ❖ **P.R.O.U.D. - Parents Regional Outreach for Understanding Downs** - Support for parents of children with Down syndrome. (714) 547-2895
- ❖ **Rett Syndrome Group** - Contact Rebecca Craft, (949) 856-9320 or Susan McLaughlin, (949) 858-8411
- ❖ **Sibshop** - Workshop for siblings ages 8-13 of children with special needs. Call Kathleen McFarlin, (714) 557-1291
- ❖ **Single Parent Group** - For single parents of children with special needs. Contact Jacqui Kerze, (714) 796-5299
- ❖ **Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK)** - Educational assistance and support for parents of children to ages 3 to 22. Call (714) 533-TASK (8275)
- ❖ **Tuberous Sclerosis** - Support group for families. Contact Lee Ann Addison for more information, (949) 495-7126
- ❖ **Vietnamese Parent Support Group** - Contact Queenie Hoang at (714) 557-1291; pager number (714) 664-6899
- ❖ **Williams Syndrome** - Support for families of people with Williams Syndrome. Call Darlene Ginnett, (562) 598-5559

Grupos En Español

- ❖ **Grupo de Autismo Angeles** - Para más información llame a Gloria y Jose Hernandez, (714) 995-1955
 - ❖ **Grupo Arcoiris Síndrome de Down** - Para más información llame a Maria Piceno, (714) 558-5400
 - ❖ **Hacia Los 3 Años...Transición** - Un grupo de padres con niños recibiendo Servicios de Intervencion Temprana Para Educacion y Apoyo durante el proceso de transición. Para más información llame a Consuela Morales (714) 685-5514
 - ❖ **Noche de las Madres** - Para más información llame a Barbara Dominguez (714) 998-4912
 - ❖ **Nuevos Horizontes** - Para más información llame a Barbara Dominguez, (714) 998-4912
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Parent Vendorization Training and Caregiver Respite Training Kick Off

Starting in January 2002, Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC) will offer two new training programs: one for current and prospective parent vendors and the other for direct care respite workers.

Parent Vendor Training

RCOC will provide free training to assist parents with the process of becoming vendored by RCOC to purchase or provide respite, transportation or day care for their children with developmental disabilities. All prospective parent vendors will need to attend this two-hour orientation training in order to become vendored, and current parent vendors also are strongly encouraged to attend.

The purpose of the training is to educate families about their responsibilities under state law to properly account for taxpayer dollars received. Parents who, for example, hire people to provide respite care for their children and then bill the regional center for those hours are actually employers and must keep written time and payroll records. Just as with any other service provider, parent-vouchered services are subject to audits, and if the dollars cannot be properly accounted for, findings for mismanagement of public funds could

result in parents having to reimburse the Regional Center for some monies received.

This training will be offered on an ongoing basis at least two times a month and locations will vary among RCOC's area offices. The days and times will also vary from weekends, evenings and days to accommodate as many schedules as possible.

Families have expressed an interest in such training because of their concern that they are not as knowledgeable about their responsibility as they should be. Although parents receive a packet of information outlining their accountability as vendors, the training will help to clarify the information and answer any questions parents or family members may have.

CareGiver™ Training Program

Another educational resource that RCOC will sponsor starting in January is a CareGiver™ Training Program for direct care workers who provide respite services for families. This is a great opportunity for respite workers to receive comprehensive preparation for their task. RCOC has contracted with an outside training consultant to provide a 20-hour curriculum that will cover behavioral supports, crisis intervention, safety, and stress management for

caregivers, among other topics. All participants who successfully finish the course will receive a certificate of completion. The course instructor is the parent of a child with a developmental disability and also a parent vendor for respite in another regional center's area.

The CareGiver™ Training Program will be held at least 10 times in 2002 and the location will vary among RCOC's area offices. It is being offered free of charge to all interested respite providers, including direct care staff of respite agencies. If you are currently a parent vendor with RCOC, you will receive a letter in December or January about this training. At the time of this printing, exact locations and dates were still being determined, so check your mail for notification. Once the schedule is finalized, the information will be included in RCOC's monthly Community Calendar sent to all families, consumers and service providers, and it will be posted on RCOC's Website in the Community Calendar section.

If you have questions about the CareGiver™ Training Program or the parent vendorization training, please call DeAnna Garcia-Greene at (714) 796-5308 or Marta Acevedo at (714) 796-5244 or Mark Antenucci at (714) 796-5254.

Families Needed for Special Project

Goal of Operation Housecall is to Increase Physician Sensitivity

Area XI Developmental Disabilities Board and the University of California, Irvine Medical School are collaborating on a project in Orange County aimed at increasing the sensitivity of future physicians to people with developmental disabilities. Second year medical students will be assigned to make a minimum two-hour "house call" on families of children with developmental disabili-

ties. The student will observe typical daily activities such as getting ready for school or sitting down to a meal. The goal is to educate students about the issues and challenges that families of children with special needs face.

Before they visit, students will have listened to a lecture by the executive director of Area Board XI. They will take information and resources to share with families. And

of course, the students will respect the privacy and confidentiality of all families involved in the house calls.

Families willing to participate in this important program are needed now. If you are interested in sharing part of your day with a future medical doctor, please contact Rhys Burchill at the Area Board, (714) 558-4404.



Spotlight Awards Continue to be Popular

In contrast to the first year of the Spotlight Awards when ticket sales trickled in until the last minute, the fifth annual event held on September 14 was sold out almost two weeks in advance. With more than 800 people attending — despite the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon earlier that week — the crowd overflowed the largest ballroom at the Irvine Marriott Hotel.

“The annual increase in attendance demonstrates that our local community is committed to supporting those who enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities,” said Jacqui Kerze, RCOC family support coordinator and chairperson of the event planning committee.

The Spotlight Awards, a collaborative community effort, culminated in the dinner dance ceremony where 11 individuals and organizations were recognized for excellent service and life-enhancing contributions to people with developmental disabilities. Actor John Moschitta, Jr., best known for his fast talking in television commercials, most notably for Federal Express, served as Master of Ceremonies.

Award recipients

Community Partnership:

Very Special Arts California (represented by Gallery Director Mary Cook). This nonprofit organization



operates an art gallery at Main Place Mall in Santa Ana and offers numerous art classes and exhibits for people with all manner of mental and physical disabilities.

Consumer: Joe Padilla has been actively involved in campaigning for the rights of people with disabilities for many years through People First, a state-wide self-advocacy organization. Recently, he has advocated for people with developmental disabilities in Orange County who face eviction from their apartments.



Employer: Cox Communications



(represented by Chris Parks, manager of technical assistance). Cox has employed people with disabilities in various departments for 10

years and provides integrated employment for people with severe behavioral challenges. The company also emphasizes the use of natural supports.

Lifetime Achievement: Sandy

Garcia, adaptive P.E. teacher at Buena Park Speech & Language Development Center. Nineteen years ago Sandy organized an



extracurricular dance team called “The Hi-Tops”. In addition to local performances, the group has traveled to Washington, D.C., Connecticut and North Carolina for the Special Olympics World Games.

Living Options Vendor:

Mainstream Independent Living Services (represented by Mary Marta, director and Pat Griffith, program manager). This year the staff helped a client purchase his own home by finding a realtor and lender who would donate some of their services. The agency also helped a consumer mother of three who was the victim of spousal abuse by obtaining emergency placement at a shelter and follow-up services.

Below: Mary Marta (left) and Pat Griffith of Mainstream Independent Living Services.



Parent: Lourdes Maria Rodriguez is a wife and mother of three who is always willing to share her time and energy to assist in supporting,



educating and advocating for people with developmental disabilities and their families. She has volunteered with Parent Connection, at RCOC family support events, and with other groups for several years.

Professional Achievement: Hedy Hansen, Comfort Connection executive director, is the parent of a son with autism. She seeks to effect positive policy changes and improve the service delivery system by serv-

See ‘Spotlight,’ on next page

Spotlight

(continued from previous page)

ing on numerous task forces and boards, such as the Orange County Mental Health Board and the Federal Intra-Agency Coordinating Council.



RCOC Achievement: Shernan Hidalgo, quality assurance coordinator, conducts himself in a professional and impartial way when carrying out inspections and investigations at residential facilities. He thoroughly informs the service provider about the situation to help them improve services. His first priority is the care and protection of people with developmental disabilities.



Support Services Vendor: Hope University (represented by Executive Director Janice Reyes). Formed nearly 30 years ago to showcase the musical talents of consumers, the program has expanded its services to include a wide

range of classes. Staff instructors help students develop their social skills as well as emotional and behavioral control. The Hi Hopes band is

well known and performs many concerts and at dances each year.

Volunteer: Eleanor Prime, founder of Friendship Ministries at the Orange County Worship Center, retired from teaching special education in 1992 and started a worship and social program for people with developmental disabilities. Serving more than 50 individuals and their families, the group has its own church service, by choice, then joins the rest of the congregation on the patio for coffee and donuts.



E. Kurt Yeager Servant Leadership: Karen Kelly was an RCOC board member for six years and



served as the board delegate to the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA). She has spent countless and tireless hours researching issues to advocate for families of consumers and help them get needed services and supports.

The Regional Center plans to host the Spotlight Awards at the Irvine Marriott again on September 20, 2002, so watch for more information in the coming months.



Benefits Specialists Explain SSI/SSDI Rules For Working

By Kimberly Patterson
benefits specialist, Dayle McIntosh Center

The Dayle McIntosh Center (DMC) for the Disabled has a new program called the Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Program. Two benefits specialists, Clarice Ventura (Laguna Niguel Office) and Kimberly Patterson (Garden Grove Office), work to help people with disabilities better understand how their Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and medical benefits will be affected once they begin working.

It is very important for people to know and understand that there are "safety nets" in place to encourage and enable individuals to work. Making the decision to go to work can be very difficult. Many people are afraid to work because they're unsure how working would affect their benefits. That is why Clarice and Kimberly are available to reassure and encourage anyone who wishes to take that step. Based on the type of benefit being received, Clarice and Kimberly can help each person find answers to their questions and help them set up their own safety net. Clarice and Kimberly can also explain various work incentives and medical benefit options to alleviate any concerns.

If you have questions about how working might affect your Social Security and SSI benefits, the benefits specialists at DMC are available to help. Call for an appointment today. You can reach Kimberly Patterson at (714) 621-3300, extension 3023, or Clarice Ventura at (949) 643-7275. All information shared with the Benefits Specialists at DMC is kept completely confidential.

UCI and RCOC Collaboration Yields Positive Outcomes for Consumers

By Ira T. Lott, M.D., project director
UCI Neurodevelopmental Program

In 1998 Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC) began working with the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Medical Center on a project to study and better coordinate medical care for people with developmental disabilities who were taking more than one psychotropic medication for mental health or behavioral conditions. The project has had two components: 1) to carry out a survey of polypharmacy (more than one prescription) for psychotropic medications on behalf of RCOC consumers, and 2) to hold an Interdisciplinary Team Clinic for the assessment and treatment of consumers on polypharmacy.

Gathering information

The polypharmacy survey involved determining how many RCOC consumers were prescribed multiple psychotropic medications. We were able to obtain this information and related data on all RCOC consumers whose pharmacy prescriptions were filled through the CalOPTIMA network. Under a collaborative agreement with CalOPTIMA, we were able to integrate the Regional Center and CalOPTIMA databases to access the needed information while maintaining strict privacy and security controls. The data was studied for various implications during 17 consecutive months between 1998 and 2000 and included consumers

who were on one or more of the psychotropic medications approved for CalOPTIMA members. This database is unique in the field of developmental disabilities and allows us to observe the patterns of psychotropic drug use among a large population of RCOC consumers.

Assessment Clinic

With the assistance of the Regional Center, consumers who were taking more than two psychotropic medications and who presented severe neurobehavioral concerns were referred to the Interdisciplinary Clinic at UCI Medical Center. The consumer's service coordinator, family, residential service provider, and physician were invited to attend the clinic visit and provide pertinent information. The evaluation for each referred consumer consisted of 1) a detailed medical record review, 2) examinations by a neurologist, psychiatrist, psychologist and behaviorist, and 3) assessment of maladaptive behaviors. At the conclusion of each examination, the interdisciplinary team met to discuss the information and a report was prepared detailing relevant aspects of the examinations along with specific recommendations for behavioral and pharmacological management. The report was sent to the consumer's primary care physician with copies to the prescribing psychiatrist, the consumer and/or family, and the residential facility as appropriate.

More than 500 consumers have been referred and evaluated since the clinic began. Follow-up information on a sub-sample of consumers seen in the clinic indicates a high frequency of improvement in target symptoms when team recommendations were followed.

The UCI Team

The staff for this project and the interdisciplinary team includes the following UCI faculty: Ira T. Lott, M.D., project director; Gail Fernandez, M.D., developmental psychiatrist; Suresh Gurbani, M.D., Ph.D., developmental neurologist; Curt Sandman, Ph.D., clinical psychologist; Paul E. Touchette, Ph.D., educational psychologist; Lazlo Engelman, Ph.D., biostatistician; and Michelle Tirella, Ph.D., study coordinator.

The project staff members are pleased to be part of this collaboration with the Regional Center. In the coming year we will expand the database study to look for patterns of psychotropic medication usage within the Regional Center population. The clinic will continue its current work and collect additional data regarding follow-up and outcome. All of us are working toward having RCOC assume a nationally visible role in the study, management and optimization of psychotropic medication usage among people with developmental disabilities who live in the community. Further information about this project may be obtained by calling Michelle Tirella, Ph.D., at (714) 456-2947.

RCOC Safety Training Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Jan. 10	2-4 p.m.	RCOC East Ofc.	April 24	5-7 p.m.	RCOC West
Jan. 23	5-7 p.m.	RCOC North Ofc.	April 29	5-7 p.m.	RCOC East
Jan. 28	2-4 p.m.	RCOC South Ofc.	May 8	2-4 p.m.	RCOC North
Feb. 6	5-7 p.m.	RCOC West Ofc.	May 11	2-4 p.m.	Project Ind.
Feb. 11	5-7 p.m.	RCOC East Ofc.	May 20	2-4 p.m.	RCOC South
Feb. 23	10 a.m.-12	Project Indepen.	June 3	5-7 p.m.	RCOC East
			June 15	10 a.m.-12	Integrity House
			June 24	2-4 p.m.	RCOC South

RCOC Anonymous Reporting Line Now Operational

Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC) has established a voice mailbox where callers can report suspicious activity concerning people with developmental disabilities without having to identify themselves. If you know or suspect that a regional center consumer has been or is being abused, neglected or endangered in any way or that a service provider is not complying with regulations, please feel free to make a report to the Community Watch Line at (800) 461-9880.

This is different than the Special Incident Reporting activity utilized by

service providers to notify RCOC of serious incidents involving consumers. Special Incident Reporting can include serious illness or injury and is a formal process governed by California law.

"The purpose of the Community Watch line is to allow the community at large to serve as 'eyes and ears,' so to speak and help look out for the welfare of people with developmental disabilities," said RCOC Executive Director Bill Bowman.

"It's a high priority to us at the regional center to protect the health and safety of the people we serve, and this provides another avenue of oversight in addition to our quality assurance, service coordination and special incident reporting activities," Bowman said.

The Community Watch Line is also available to any service provider staff member who witnesses an incident and feels his or her job would be jeopardized by making a formal report.

All reports will be investigated by the Regional Center. Callers need to provide as much information as possible and spell any names that are included in the message.

It would be helpful for reporting parties to identify themselves if they are willing to be contacted to assist in the Regional Center's investigation. The Regional Center will keep the caller's identity confidential but cannot guarantee the anonymity of a known witness in matters investigated by law enforcement officials or agencies.

Appreciation Extended to Resource Group Volunteers

At the November RCOC board meeting, the volunteers who donate their time to serve on RCOC's resource groups were recognized in a brief ceremony and awarded certificates of appreciation. The volunteers are people with developmental disabilities, family members, and associates from other agencies such as United Cerebral Palsy, Department of Rehabilitation and Orange County Department of Education.

The following people were recognized: Gail Ceconi, Bob Clatterbuck, Bill Erickson, Jim Gerard, Yvonne Kluttz, Connie Layland,



Above: Lonny Keefover (right), RCOC's adult resource group leader, presents a certificate of appreciation to volunteer Fernando Peña.

Kathleen McFarlin, Susan Madrano, Fernando Peña, and Brian Story.

Resource groups provide information to service coordinators so that they can be the decision-makers at meetings with families and consumers. In addition the groups project trends, assist with quality assurance and identify needed resources. For instance, the Adult Resource Group provides information about day programs, employment and transportation to help service coordinators prepare for Person-Centered Plans and Planning Team Meetings. It also identifies areas where future resource development is needed. The group is made up of the leader, a service coordinator, a consumer, a parent, and representatives from RCOC management, quality assurance, transportation and support staff, and Department of Rehabilitation. Similar groups exist for supported/independent living, eligibility and health resources, living options, education, and utilization review (Purchase of Service Guidelines).



Above: Jim Gerard of Orange County Department of Education holds the certificate presented to him by RCOC Education Coordinator Juda Carter.



Left: Yvonne Kluttz receives a certificate from RCOC North Area Manager Adam Gottdank.

Board of Directors 2001 - 2002

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2002 Board Meetings:

Jan. 3 ❖ Feb. 7 ❖ Mar. 7 ❖ Apr. 4 ❖ May 2 ❖ June 6

*The board of directors meets at 6:00 p.m. at 801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana.
The public is welcome.*

The Regional Center of Orange County has four locations to serve you:

Orange Office

3111 N. Tustin Street, Suite 150
24-hour phone no.: (714) 685-5555
TDD: (714) 685-5575

Santa Ana Office

801 Civic Center Dr. West
24-hour phone no.: (714) 796-5100
TDD: (714) 667-6021

RCOC Web site: www.rcocdd.com

San Juan Capistrano Office

26311 Junipero Serra Road, Ste. 180
24-hour phone no.: (949) 234-8800
TDD: (949) 488-3399

Westminster Office

13950 Milton Ave., Suite 200
24-hour phone no.: (714) 889-7200
TDD: (714) 889-7234

*Dialogue is normally published four times per year for consumers, families, service providers, and members of the community by the Regional Center of Orange County. We welcome your ideas, contributions and suggestions. Please send all correspondence to: **Karen Taylor**, Dialogue Editor, Regional Center of Orange County, P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702 or call her at (714) 796-5208.*

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*The Regional Center of
Orange County is a nonprofit,
private agency that contracts with
the California Department of
Developmental Services to provide
services to individuals with
developmental disabilities.*

Look for Tele-Friends on page 4!



Regional Center of Orange County
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Dialogue Newsletter

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