



Dialogue

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State Budget Update

How Cost-Savings Measures Will Affect RCOC Families

For some time now, the effect of the global recession on California tax revenues and state-funded services has been front page news. What was expected to be a \$24 billion budget shortfall through 2009-2010 has swelled to \$26.2 billion as the economy has continued to worsen. Like every other area of state government, funding for services for people with developmental disabilities and their families has been reduced. If California's economy does not improve in the coming months, many experts predict that even deeper cuts to state government will be needed before this fiscal year is over.

Funding for services for people with developmental disabilities and their families has been reduced.

Commenting on the 2009-2010 fiscal year cuts and cost-savings measures that have been approved by the Legislature and Governor, RCOC's new Executive Director Larry



Landauer said: "As challenging as these cuts are for our Orange County community, it is important for those RCOC serves to know that this regional center remains committed to meeting their needs."

State Funding Cuts Total \$334 Million

A complete list of the 36 budget cuts and cost-savings measures is posted on RCOC's Web site (www.rcocdd.com). Statewide, these are expected to save a total of \$334 million in state tax dollars this fiscal year. This total combines proposals that were submitted earlier this year by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to save \$100 million with other measures intended to yield \$234 million in savings that were suggested by a stakeholder group

formed by DDS. They range from one-time savings through simple cuts, to creating all-new and less-costly service models, and implementing new eligibility and service regulations. The \$334 million is in addition to the 3% cut to regional center operations and 3% cut to service providers that were passed this past February. It also accounts only for California's share of the cost of services, and does not include the reduced federal funds the state will receive as a result of the lower spending. As such, the actual reductions to funding for the community care system during this fiscal year are much higher.

Some of the new standards and requirements being implemented statewide are already in place in Orange County.

"Regional centers and service providers will be required to step up and work in partnership to ensure that these cost-saving measures succeed," said Landauer. "Like families everywhere, we are being forced by the economic crisis to do much more with fewer dollars; however, because our community is a long-time leader in stewardship, some of the new standards and requirements being

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Dialogue

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Dialogue can also be read online at RCOC's Web site: www.rcocdd.com.

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2009 Board Meetings

September 3 • October 1 • November 5

December 3

The public is invited to attend. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. and are held in the Regional Center Board Room at 801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana.

RCOC Administration

Larry Landauer, *Executive Director*

Janis White, *Chief Operating Officer*

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Organizational Effectiveness

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From the Board

Board Names Larry Landauer To Lead RCOC

After a competitive, statewide search that involved a number of distinguished applicants, the RCOC Board of Directors appointed Larry Landauer to lead the organization as its new Executive Director.

Larry is well known to many RCOC consumers and families, having begun his career at RCOC in 1988 as a service coordinator.

Larry has worked for RCOC for 21 years and is highly-respected and well-known in the developmental disabilities community in Orange County and statewide. He assumed his new position on April 10.

He was Director of Consumer and Community Resources for eight years, and served as Interim Chief Operating Officer for the past five months.

The search committee included two service providers, two RCOC Board members with developmental disabilities, and three members of the Board's executive committee who worked with an independent recruiter to screen all of the applicants. The

full Board interviewed the finalists and made the final selection.

The Board cited Larry's leadership abilities, his wide-ranging experience and knowledge of the regional center, and his understanding of the Lanterman Act as key reasons for selecting him.

The Board has complete confidence in Larry's ability to lead RCOC.

Larry is well known to many RCOC consumers and families, having begun his career at RCOC in 1988 as a service coordinator. During his two decades with RCOC, he worked his way up through the ranks, gaining experience and first-hand knowledge in virtually all aspects of regional center operations – from service coordination, area management and quality assurance, to the full range of community resources and public benefits for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Most recently, he was Director of Consumer and Community Resources for eight years, and served as Interim Chief Operating Officer for the past five months.

Larry has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in social work, and is a member of many professional associations. He has also been a presenter and expert panel member at numerous professional conferences.

The Board has complete confidence in Larry's ability to lead RCOC with integrity and a total commitment to the regional center's mission and the people the organization serves.

Executive Director's Report

Changes at RCOC Aimed at Protecting Consumer Services

By Larry Landauer,
Executive Director

As Regional Center of Orange County's new Executive Director, I am honored, energized and humbled by the trust placed in

me by our Board of Directors. Having dedicated my professional career to the service of people with developmental disabilities and their families in Orange County, I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to lead our regional center at this critical time in RCOC's history.



I am hopeful and optimistic about the future of RCOC and the community care system as a whole.

Certainly, this economic recession has brought fiscal challenges greater than any that California and the regional center system have ever faced. The service provider community and the regional centers have had our budgets cut significantly. And, given the continued deterioration of California's economy, there are very real concerns that there may be even more cuts to

regional center services during the current fiscal year.

Still, I am hopeful and optimistic about the future of RCOC and the community care system as a whole.

I know this community. We are fortunate to have an abundance of talented, dedicated and creative individuals and organizations in Orange County. We are a diverse community, yet we are united in our unwavering commitment to Lanterman Act principles. Come what may, I am confident that we have the ingenuity and know-how to ensure that these principles are upheld.

Structural Changes Reduce Operations Costs

In response to the budgetary crisis we face, I made a number of changes in our organization's structure within my first few days as Executive Director. Given our reduced budget, as well as new and different requirements from the Department of Developmental Services, these changes were necessary to help RCOC operate more efficiently, more effectively and at less cost – without compromising our focus and commitment to excellent service coordination.

We are a diverse community, yet we are united in our unwavering commitment to Lanterman Act principles.

Three senior-level positions were eliminated. Several employees were moved to different positions, and

some positions were reclassified to a lower level with a lower pay rate. Together, these organizational changes alone are saving RCOC approximately \$350,000 per year, while streamlining the agency. Importantly, by making these changes and others that were implemented in recent months, RCOC aims to avoid the need to furlough service coordinators in the current fiscal year.

This was a key priority for us since our service coordinators – the individuals who work most closely with the individuals and families we serve – are the heart and soul of RCOC.

Budget Reductions Pose Challenges

In this issue of *Dialogue*, we have departed from our typical format in order to provide more information on how California's budget crisis will affect RCOC families. Our cover usually features a profile of a person with developmental disabilities. This issue's cover story instead provides an overview of some of the budget reductions and cost-savings measures for fiscal 2009-2010 that are expected to become law by the time the issue is printed and mailed.

It is important to acknowledge the severity of our challenges. However, as your new Executive Director, I want you to know that RCOC is committed to working collaboratively with our community. We will continue to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families in Orange County. And, we will continue to evolve and make the changes that are necessary to ensure that the Lanterman Promise endures.

Consumer Advisory Team Update

CAT Members Learn About Self-Defense

By Jay Connor, CAT Chairman

At the April CAT meeting, Taryn Roberts of Project Get Safe presented a program showing how people with disabilities can protect themselves from someone who might try to harm them. Since being able to stay safe is important to independence, I wanted to share some of the tips we learned from her.

The presentation was very interactive, with everyone in the group participating in demonstrating the self-defense techniques. We learned how each of us can use our mind, our voice and our body or wheelchair to defend ourselves.

- **Using our Minds** – Learning to recognize situations that are unsafe and avoiding them is a



big part of self-defense. Remembering the Buddy System is one of the easiest things we can do to stay safe. The Buddy System means that we take a “buddy” – a friend, family member or trusted caregiver – whenever we go somewhere, rather than going alone. We also make sure that a family member, roommate or caregiver knows where we are going and when we will be back.

- **Using our Voices** – Even if we have a Buddy with us, someone could try to get too close to us, or do something to make us feel uncomfortable or frightened. By speaking up loudly, shouting “Back off!” “I don’t know you!” or “Leave me alone!” we can draw the attention of others in the community who can help us.
- **Using our Bodies** – As a last resort, we learned some ways to physically defend ourselves. Depending on a person’s individual abilities, these could include running away, hand movements such

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

August 12

September 16

October 21

November 11

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon at RCOC’s Santa Ana office, 801 Civic Center Drive West. Call Nancy Mata at (714) 796-5206 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.

as raising arms to keep from being hit, or using a wheelchair to strike back at an attacker.

After the presentation, Taryn presented Get Safe kits to all the CAT members who attended. The kits included Get Safe t-shirts and handbooks, emergency identity cards for us to fill-out and carry in our wallets, and Get Safe stuffed bears. These materials will remind us of the important skills we learned to avoid harm. As Stuart Haskins, the founder of Project Get Safe, says: “Look for trouble, then stay away from it!”

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

Behavior Management Workshops are being offered in the coming months by Regional Center of Orange County. These activities are offered at no cost to parents. To gain the most value from the workshops, parents are encouraged to attend all sessions in a series.

The five-session workshops (Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training) cover essential principles of positive behavior management, with a practical focus on helping parents of children with developmental disabilities change their own behavior and that of their children. The focus of the fifth (last) session in this workshop series is toilet training. The seven-session “Social Skills Training” workshop is focused on helping parents nurture social skills among children. This particular session focuses on children 13-18 years old.

In all of the workshops, parents are actively involved, and invited to discuss the specific behavioral challenges they are confronting. Advance reservations are required and group size is typically limited to 40-45 families. Contact your service coordinator or Thelma Day at (714) 796-5223 for additional information regarding dates, times and locations, and to register.

NOTE: Child care is not provided, so please do not bring children to the workshops.

Social Skills Training Workshop – Focus on Ages 13 through 18 years (7 sessions)

Presented in English by Erin Davis, M.A., Parent Training Consultant

When: Tuesday evenings – Sept. 8, Sept. 15, Sept. 22, Sept. 29, Oct. 6, Oct. 13 and Nov. 3 (**NOTE: Final session takes place 3 weeks after previous session**)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Santa Ana Office
801 Civic Center Drive West

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in Vietnamese by Quynh T. Nguyen, M.A., BCBA, Thang C. Do, M.A. and Julia C. Kim, B.A.

When: Thursday evenings – Sept. 10, Sept. 17, Sept. 24, Oct. 1 and Oct. 8
(**NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop**)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Westminster Office
5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100

Behavior Management Workshop (4 sessions)

Presented in Spanish by Jose Rios, M.S., BCBA

When: Thursday evenings – Oct. 15, Oct. 22, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Santa Ana Office
801 Civic Center Drive West

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in English by Joyce Tu, Ed.D., BCBA

When: Tuesday evenings – Oct. 13, Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 3 and Nov. 10

(**NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop**)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Irvine Office
46 Discovery, Suite 200

State Budget Update
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implemented statewide are already in place in Orange County.”

Some cost-savings measures, such as those limiting eligibility for Early Start, appear to be aimed primarily at lowering future cost growth.

For example, the new statewide requirements for cost-effective transportation and the ban on experimental treatments are already embodied in RCOC’s Governance Policies. Also, all regional centers are now prohibited from purchasing several services that RCOC and many other regional centers have not traditionally funded. These include camping and social recreational activities, as well as art, dance and music programs, which RCOC’s Board of Directors has determined are a parent’s responsibility.

Behavioral Services Standards

Many of the families RCOC serves receive behavioral services, a fast-growing service area that is the subject of new standards. These include standards for behavioral assessment and intervention planning, as well as parent participation and periodic review of the service. In addition, regional centers are being called on to provide group training for parents on behavior intervention techniques for families in lieu of some behavior management services.

RCOC has for a number of years offered behavior management workshops to parents as a support to other behavioral services. *(See page 5 for a list of workshops being offered in the coming months.)*

Holiday Schedule Expands

Among the measures that will likely be a hardship for many RCOC families is the increased number of mandatory holidays that day programs will be required to take. Previously, day programs funded by RCOC had 12 holidays. During this fiscal year, the state has required 14 holidays. Since RCOC cannot pay day programs for these additional days, families will need to make other arrangements. Each service provider affected by this change has received the new holiday schedule to share with the individuals and families they serve.

Curbing Future System Growth

Some cost-savings measures, such as those limiting eligibility for Early Start, appear to be aimed primarily at lowering future cost growth for the regional center system, rather than cutting services for people already receiving services.

During this fiscal year, the state has required 14 holidays.

“We are very disappointed that California is limiting eligibility for Early Start, because we think that

program is an outstanding investment of tax dollars,” Landauer said. “At the same time, we appreciate that families now in Early Start will not face yet another upheaval in their lives, and that the state is creating another, separate program for those who don’t meet the new, more stringent standards for Early Start participation.”

Another change requires families in the future to use their private insurance coverage to pay for Early Start medical services.

More Changes and Reductions Are Possible

Economic experts disagree about when California will begin to recover from the recession, and start to see tax revenues increase. Some think this could happen as early as the end of this year; others think it will be several years before there is a turnaround. If the economy does not improve in the coming months, there is a real possibility that California will be forced into another round of budget cuts.

“RCOC is committed to keeping the people we serve informed about how the state budget crisis affects their services and those of their family members,” said Landauer. He encouraged readers to bookmark the RCOC Web site (www.rcocdd.com) and check it regularly for the latest updates and information on communicating their concerns to their elected representatives.

Changes to Medi-Cal Benefits

California's budget crisis has led to reductions in Medi-Cal benefits for some RCOC consumers. The changes do not affect consumers under 21 years of age, or adults residing in Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) — these individuals will continue to receive their Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal benefits just as they always have.

For all other adult consumers — those living at home, in supported living and independent living settings, or in Community Care Facilities — Medi-Cal no longer pays for dental care, speech therapy, podiatric services, audiology, chiropractic services, acupuncture, optometric and optician services, incontinence creams

and washes and the psychology services currently provided through Orange County Mental Health.

There is, however, some good news. CalOptima has made the decision to continue covering some of the services dropped by Medi-Cal for its consumer members. These include speech therapy, podiatric, audiology, and chiropractic services. In addition, dual-eligible consumers (those who qualify for Medicare and Medi-Cal) who are participants in the *CalOptima One Care* program, or another health network offering dental and vision care in their package of benefits, may continue to receive these services.

Finally, for consumers not eligible for dental coverage through Denti-

Cal, their health network or private insurance, RCOC is exploring options to ensure continued access to basic dental services.

The changes do not affect consumers under 21 years of age, or adults residing in Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs).

For additional information and updates on Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal program and benefit changes, check the RCOC Web site at www.rcocdd.com or contact your RCOC Service Coordinator. For questions about CalOptima coverage, members can call the CalOptima Customer Service Department at 714-246-8500 or toll-free at 1-888-587-8088.



Nominations for Spotlight Awards Due Sept. 4

While the budget crisis has forced RCOC to forego hosting the Spotlight Awards dinner and dance this year, the Orange County community will still have the opportunity to honor some of its most extraordinary members with Spotlight Awards. The nomination and judging process will remain the same as in past years; however, this year the awards will be presented at the Nov. 5, 2009 RCOC Board of Directors meeting which will take place at RCOC's Santa Ana office.

An official nomination package with complete information about award categories and criteria is included with this issue of *Dialogue*. Honorees will be notified ahead of time and asked to attend the Nov. 5 Board meeting to accept their awards.

Completed nominations must be postmarked by **Friday, Sept. 4, 2009**, so be sure to get started right away on your entries.

RCOC Families Enjoy Outdoor Fun at Recreation Resource Fair

The 6th Annual Recreation Resource Fair & Adventure Day on March 13 drew more than 600 RCOC children and parents, service providers and volunteers to Oak Canyon Lake in Orange. A highlight of this fun event, where families learned about camping, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities, was the fish pond where participants were able to try to catch a fish. This year more than 35 fish were caught, with the biggest one measuring more than 29 inches! The event was organized by RCOC and its Comfort Connection Family Resource Center and Pathways to Adventure, and made possible by the generous support of numerous corporate sponsors. These included two Chick-fil-A stores – Tustin Marketplace and Woodbury (Irvine) – that provided free food and other giveaways, and Patriot Environmental Services.



Volunteer dancers from the Therapeutic Arts Center in Santa Ana provided wonderful family entertainment. Pictured (L-R) are: Maricruz Acosta, Eddie Diaz, Cuahutemoc Diaz (instructor) and Paola Pineda.

Regional Center of Orange County Locations


Santa Ana Office	Orange Office	Irvine Office	Westminster Office
801 Civic Center Dr. West 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-5100	3111 N. Tustin, Suite 150 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-3700	46 Discovery, Suite 200 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-4060	5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-2900

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