

In the Spotlight

Samuel McBrain

Transitions from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and beyond, can be disruptive in any student's life. For those with developmental disabilities, the disruptions are often magnified. Even small changes in a routine can heighten a child's anxiety, and parents can be challenged by unfamiliar schools and programs.

The team began exploring possible adult programs for Samuel about a year before he would actually make his next transition.

When it was time for Samuel "Sam" McBrain, who has autism and a mild intellectual disability, to transition from Trabuco Hills High School to his adult transition program, he didn't want to leave high school. It was difficult for him to get used to the new people and surroundings, but once he became comfortable, his mom Veronica McBrain said he never wanted to miss a day!

Both Veronica and Sam's father Jenk McBrain, worried their son would have another difficult transition when



Haley, Sam, Jenk and Veronica celebrate Sam's completion of the Futures adult transition program.

it was time for him to leave the public school system. Their solution was to work closely with their Regional Center of Orange County Service Coordinator Negin Badihi, and to plan well ahead. Negin has worked with the family since 2017, attending all of Samuel's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings and providing support for his parents, who she says are fantastic advocates for their son.

Together, the team began exploring possible adult programs for Samuel about a year before he would actually make his next transition. Negin consulted RCOC's internal resource group for suggestions, while the McBrains tapped their large parent

network, asking about programs that might meet Samuel's needs.

"The biggest challenge we had was finding the right program for Samuel, in the right area," said Negin. The family ultimately selected Dreams of America in Irvine, which offers a broad array of educational, life skills and work-focused programs to help prepare Sam to live on his own and get a job when the time is right.

"We looked at several programs, but when we toured Dreams of America, Sam toured with us and with his best friend, who was also transitioning, and his family," said Veronica. "He loved it! He saw pictures of friends

See **Samuel McBrain** on page 7.

Dialogue

Dialogue is published four times per year by the Regional Center of Orange County for people with developmental disabilities, their families and service providers. *Dialogue* can also be read online at RCOC's website: www.rcocdd.com.

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Upcoming Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Board Meetings

Sept. 5 • Nov. 7 • Jan. 9
March 5 • May 7 • June 4

The public is invited to attend RCOC board meetings. The meetings begin at 6 p.m. in the Regional Center Board Room at RCOC's headquarters, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana.

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Self Determination Program Update

California is continuing its roll-out of the Self-Determination Program (SDP). As of mid-June, 59% of Orange County's participants had completed the required orientation, with another 20% registered for future sessions. If you were selected for the program and haven't yet gone through orientation, be sure to reach out to your RCOC Service Coordinator to get started.

In June, RCOC began leading the training sessions required

for independent facilitators. SDP participants may employ these trained independent facilitators to help them with things like making decisions about their individual budget, and accessing services and supports.

Of the 150 Orange County SDP participants selected by the

Department of Developmental Services (DDS), 23 have opted out of the program.

If you are interested in being considered for one of these openings, you can get more information and submit your name directly to DDS at www.dds.ca.gov/SDP.

Information is also available on RCOC's website. If you have any questions about the process, feel free to contact RCOC's Cathy Furukawa at cfurukawa@rcocdd.com or (714) 796-5181.



Engage with RCOC on Social Media

Did you know that you can engage with RCOC on social media? We have official pages on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. When you follow us, you'll have access to timely information and news, as well as events and activities of interest to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

It's also a good idea to make sure RCOC has your email address, since we often send emails to families we think might be interested in particular events and activities. If you're not sure we have your current email address on file, please be sure to contact your RCOC Service Coordinator to update it.

Executive Director's Report

State Approves Increases for Many Service Providers

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

I want to open this column by thanking all of the dedicated family members, self-advocates, and service providers who made their voices heard during California's recent budget hearings and discussions. Thanks to your efforts, and the support of elected leaders on both sides of the aisle, many of the service providers who deliver vital support for people with developmental disabilities and their families will be receiving an eight percent increase, effective January 1, 2020.

Many of the service providers who deliver vital support for people with developmental disabilities and their families will be receiving an eight percent increase.

When they agreed to this increase, legislators and Governor Newsom also decided that the increase would last for just one calendar year, ending December 31, 2020. We understand the rationale for a temporary increase is that by the time it ends, the State will have implemented a new and modernized rate structure that enables

sensible and sustainable budgeting for all service providers over the long term.



You may remember that in my last column, I mentioned the rate study that the State Legislature commissioned in 2016. The fiscal

2019-2020 budget legislation calls for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to begin work on rate reform, and they will be referring to that comprehensive rate study in their efforts. DDS has been given a very short time frame to complete their work. However, the rate study was completed this past March, so most of the necessary research and exploration has already been completed.

The fiscal 2019-2020 budget legislation calls for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to begin work on rate reform.

It was disappointing that we did not achieve the eight percent increase we were requesting for all regional center service providers across the board. However, for those that did not receive increases, we were successful in staving off further losses they may have experienced had our community not pulled together and advocated strongly for appropriate funding.

With the fiscal 2019-2020 budget completed, the next area of focus for advocates statewide is the rate

reform that is so important for the future of the regional center system. Many years of chronic underfunding have put this vital system at risk, as service providers have struggled to absorb ever-increasing costs without commensurate increases in the rates regional centers are authorized to pay them.

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A new rate structure that takes into account the real costs of doing business and providing quality services will help service providers get on more solid financial footing. It will also make it more likely that other caring individuals will step up and expand the pool of service providers statewide, which has shrunk in recent years. A continuous influx of new service providers is necessary to replace those that have gone out of business or retired, and to spur the continuous innovation that keeps regional center services and supports responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of those we serve.

Perhaps most importantly, reasonable rates will help all service providers to attract and retain the skilled direct support professionals that are essential for meeting the critical needs of people with developmental disabilities, and enabling them to be fully included in community life.

Person to Person

Learn About Me, Not My Disability

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair & Jess Corey, RCOC Peer Advocate

When it comes to education, a lot has changed for the better since the two of us were little. It's especially good to see movement away from those frustrating days when systems did not recognize individual potential.

When Jess was in school, many special education professionals only looked at the surface, and not at his strengths and what he could do. It took countless hours, meetings and dogged determination on his mother's part to turn the focus on him



Sylvia Delgado



Jess Corey

as an individual and what he needed to fulfill his potential.

When Sylvia started school, there was only one school for kids with special needs that served preschool through high school. After fourth grade, she went to regular school with a special day class, but it was hard because she wasn't with her peers and was called many names.

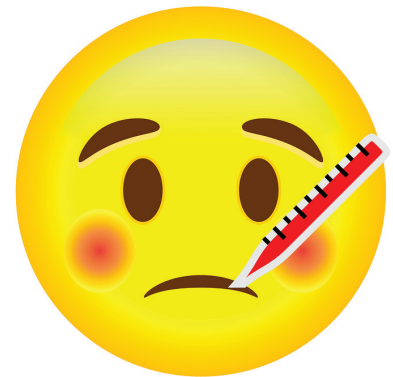
Junior high was better, but high school was tough. Bullied by a classmate with special needs, who hit her and pulled her hair, Sylvia did not feel heard or treated equally. Though she was able to take some regular classes she enjoyed, she also felt she wasn't always given options that were right for her.

Both of us are strong self-advocates now. But in those early school years, we had to rely on our parents to ensure our IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) met our needs. Sometimes it involved a lot of work.

We hope today's parents take advantage of the special education advocacy and support their RCOC Service Coordinator can provide, and RCOC's new workshops to educate families about the transitions from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school. These can save hours of frustration and help both parents and schools focus on making sure every student is properly supported.

Everyday Wellness Tip: Don't Touch!

Most of the viruses and bacteria that can make you sick get into your body through your mouth, nose or eyes, so it's a good idea to avoid touching those areas. This is especially important when you're out in public places, where you often touch surfaces – like door handles – that can harbor germs, and can come into contact with people who may not even know they're sick.



Introduction to Person-Centered Thinking

During these workshops, you'll learn the basics of person-centered thinking and how it can empower family members and others in a person's circle of support to be more effective advocates for their loved ones. You'll also learn practical techniques that can help ensure your loved one feels supported and that his or her voice is fully heard in planning sessions and in day-to-day life. All of these workshops take place at RCOC's Santa Ana office at 1525 N. Tustin Avenue. Free parking is available in the structure across the driveway. The workshops are free, but space is limited, so please call to register at (714) 558-5400.

NOTE: We are unfortunately not able to provide child care, so we ask that younger children not attend the trainings.

Families of Children Age 3-15

Thursday, Aug. 29, 1-4 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 21, 6-9:30 p.m.

Families of Adults Age 16 and Older

Thursday, Aug. 22, 6-9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 6, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

These workshops are free for parents, and 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. Parents are actively involved, and invited to discuss the specific behavioral challenges they are confronting. To gain the most value from the experience, parents are encouraged to attend all sessions in a series, though toilet training is the focus of the last session. Advance reservations are required and group size is typically limited to 8-15 families. Contact your service coordinator or Tracy Vaughan at (714) 796-5223 for additional information, and to register.

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

Presented in Spanish by Footprints

When: Tuesday evenings – Oct. 8, Oct. 15, Oct. 22, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5

Time: 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A

Safety Stu's Corner

Let's Stop Bullying!

Have you ever been bullied or seen someone else bullied, and didn't know what to do? The first step in responding to bullying behavior is to know what it is. Put simply, bullying behavior is when someone is being hurt – physically, verbally, socially, or in cyberspace.



Stuart Haskin

For example, if someone is teasing me, and I'm able to tease them back, and we're both having a fun time, then that is not bullying. BUT, if someone is teasing me and I'm not allowed to tease them back, that can be bullying behavior.

The first step in responding to bullying behavior is to know what it is.

So, what can we do? First, we tell the person who is bullying to BACKOFF! Then, we report it to our circle of support, including parents, ILS workers, group home staff, job coaches, etc. Remember, this is NOT tattling. Instead, it is HUGE part of self-advocacy! *Tattling* is when we report small things to get someone in trouble; *reporting* is when we, or someone we know, is being hurt, and we are speaking up to get help.

What if we feel like we'd be in more danger if we report bullying? Then, we need to look at ninja reporting. Ninja reporting is when we alert family or staff about the bullying behavior, but we do it on the down-low – ninja style.

However we do it, the important thing is to be part of the solution to put an end to bullying!

The IEP Journey: We Are All On the Same Team

By Liza Krassner, RCOC Board Member

Most readers likely know what an IEP is. IEP stands for Individualized Education Program, and it's a document borne out of the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

At its best, it's an opportunity for families, teachers, school administrators, related health support services personnel, and the student (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children with disabilities.

For those new to the IEP process, the experience can be extremely overwhelming.

For those new to the IEP process, the experience can be extremely overwhelming. My son's first IEP consisted of more than 28 pages of notes, plans, and goals – not including his psychological and speech and language assessments. This lengthy document was discussed with a panel of special education teachers, specialists, and school administrators around a conference table. They went through each page of the IEP packet while I sat in silence. At the end of it all, I was asked to sign



Liza Krassner

and approve the IEP that I did not fully understand. To be honest, the pressure was rough. It highlighted the profound feeling of inadequacy I felt about my understanding of this important process, and how I could best advocate and support my son's special education.

Understanding the IEP process has helped me navigate a more collaborative partnership with the school system.

The key to any successful advocacy is knowledge. As a parent, this meant investing the time to understand the elements of my son's IEP, learning our family's legal rights and responsibilities, and clarifying roles of those on my son's educational team, including school administrators. It also meant understanding the processes, practices and procedures of the educational system and how IEP goals and objectives are implemented and assessed.

I cannot even begin to underscore how important and valuable that knowledge is and has been. Understanding the IEP process has helped me navigate a more collaborative partnership with the school system to create a more focused, person-centered IEP for my son's special education, leading up to his transition years today.

Today's parents and families have better resources than I did 19 years ago for learning about the IEP process. RCOC provides helpful resources for special education advocacy, including workshops on advocacy and navigating the IEP process and transitions. RCOC service coordinators are also available to lend support and expertise to families in IEP meetings.

We are all on the same team seeking what is best for our loved ones.

Although I cannot claim to completely understand the special education system, I am a lot more comfortable and confident today when working with my son's IEP team.

As a parent who is nearing the end of the public school journey with my son, I strongly encourage younger parents and families to take advantage of the excellent resources available to you. The key thing to remember is that the IEP is an ongoing journey, and we are all on the same team seeking what is best for our loved ones.

Samuel McBrain (continued from page 1)

he knew from sports and school, and he just felt good there.”

When this story was written, Samuel was looking forward to beginning his program with Dreams of America, and his parents couldn't have been happier with the person-centered process used to help identify the right program and direction for their son.

“As much as he loved Futures [his adult transition program],” said Veronica. “When he was graduating out of it, he told us: *I'm ready!*”



Sam and his father Jenk enjoy lots of sports together, including attending Anaheim Ducks hockey and Los Angeles Dodgers games.

Now 22 years old, Sam was born in Orange County and diagnosed with autism at the age of three. Like many others with autism, he appeared to be developing normally. Then, things changed and he lost words. After his younger sister Haley was born, he

stopped talking entirely – which their doctor initially wrote-off as Sam's response to a new sibling. Neither Veronica nor Jenk had heard of autism, and it was a friend of the family who suggested they reach out to RCOC to have Sam evaluated.

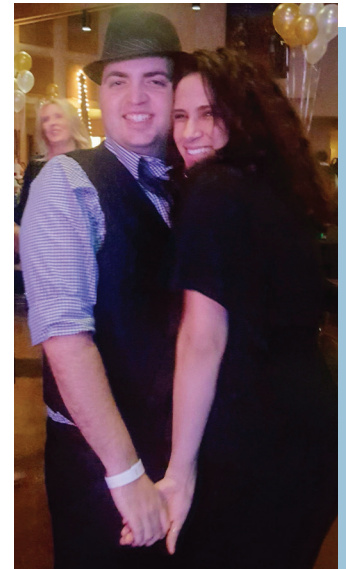
Soon after his diagnosis, Sam began receiving speech therapy, occupational therapy and behavioral services through RCOC. However, the family moved out of state for a time for Jenk's work, before returning to Orange County in 2005.

The McBrains are grateful to live in California, where the Lanterman Act guarantees their son will receive the services and supports he needs.

The McBrains are grateful to live in California, where the Lanterman Act guarantees their son will receive the services and supports he needs. They also appreciate the wide variety of social and recreational opportunities available to Sam in Orange County. An avid sports fan, he loves to play Challengers baseball, which Jenk coaches, as well as flag football and basketball.



Sam, at age 6, and his younger sister Haley, at a Challengers baseball game.



Sam, with his cousin Ariana Manaserro, enjoys dancing and socializing at the Boogie Brigade's formal dance.

Sam's also a very social young man, who likes meeting new people. Since he sometimes struggles verbally, the social skills program he attends has made that much easier for him by teaching him social cues and ways to start conversations. He enjoys practicing those skills at dances, especially the annual formal organized by the Boogie Brigade.

When the McBrains lived in other states, including North Carolina and Florida, every aspect of the family's life was different.

“The services, the relationship with our service coordinator, even the sports programs Sam's been in since he was little,” said Veronica. “Nothing in other states compares to it, and the help we receive from Regional Center...we're so blessed that we have so many options in Orange County.”



Regional Center of Orange County
 P.O. Box 22010
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Dialogue Newsletter   

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Regional Center of Orange County Locations

Santa Ana Office

1525 N. Tustin Avenue
 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-5100

Cypress Office

10803 Hope Street, Suite A
 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-2900

RCOC Partners with John Wayne Airport

RCOC is proud to have partnered with John Wayne Airport on the Airport’s Helping Hands program, providing sensitivity training aimed at supporting the Airport’s efforts to ensure a safe and comfortable experience for all travelers. We also included a new section about airport travel and assistance available from Helping Hands and the TSA in our 2019 Recreation Resources Guide. To download the Guide in English, Spanish or Vietnamese, go to the RCOC website and click on Resources for Children under the Family Support tab, then scroll down to the Recreation link. Or you can contact your RCOC Service Coordinator or RCOC’s Comfort Connection Family Resource Center at (714) 558-5400 or ccfrc@rcocdd.com.



The partnership was the subject of a front page story in the Orange County Register.



Events and Activities in the Vietnamese Community

Regional Center of Orange County has prepared this insert especially for the individuals and families we serve who are most comfortable communicating in the Vietnamese language. These events, programs and activities are presented in Vietnamese and/or are geared specifically for those in Southern California's Vietnamese community. However, some are not funded or endorsed by RCOC and this information is provided as a courtesy. If you know of other opportunities you would like to share with others in the Vietnamese community, please contact RCOC Cultural Specialist Kaitlynn Truong at (714) 558-5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

RCOC Parent Orientation

Regional Center of Orange County invites you to our New Parent Orientation Workshop for Lanterman Services, taking place at RCOC's Cypress office. Parents will learn general information about RCOC, the types of services available through RCOC, what an Individual Program Plan (IPP) is, and how to effectively partner with your RCOC Service Coordinator to ensure your loved one's needs are met. Though this workshop is designed for Vietnamese parents with a child recently found eligible for RCOC services, all parents are welcome to attend. Light refreshments will be served. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kaitlynn Truong at (714) 558-5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Thursday, September 19
6:30-8:30 p.m.
RCOC's Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street

Back to School Day for Low-Income Families

Due to the generosity of BPSOS Center for Community Advancement and 24Hr Home Care, free backpacks and school supplies will be given to low-income students ages 5-21 who are served by RCOC. Siblings are also welcome. However, supplies are limited. If you would like to participate, you must call ahead of time to put your name on the list. For more information and to RSVP, call Kaitlynn Truong at (714) 558-5405.

Saturday, August 17
10 a.m.-Noon
RCOC's Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street



Movies in the Park

Families are invited to bring lawn chairs and blankets for free movies in the park, taking place throughout August. Fun activities for the entire family begin at 6 p.m. and movies begin at dusk. For more information, call (714) 839-8611.

Movie: The Greatest Showman

Friday, August 16
Courreges Park
8556 Rouge River in Fountain Valley

Movie: Monsters University

Friday, August 23
Los Alamos Park
17901 Los Alamos in Fountain Valley

Movie: Tangled

Friday, August 30
McDowell Park
17200 Oak in Fountain Valley

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County Community Service Center Workshops

Several workshops at Westminster's County Community Service Center (CCSC) are free and open to everyone in the community. These workshops are conducted in Vietnamese. For more information on topics, the monthly schedule and to RSVP, call Lisa Nguyen, Senior Community Relation Specialist, at (657) 236-8500.

County of Orange Community Services Center
(corner of Magnolia and McFadden)
15496 Magnolia Street, Suite # 111
in Westminster

Vietnamese Service Provider Fair

In May, RCOC hosted its first ever service provider fair for Vietnamese speaking families. The event featured a wide range of RCOC service providers that have the capacity to serve Vietnamese-speaking families. Family members who attended had the opportunity to get better acquainted with RCOC staff, participate in fun activities, and speak with prospective service providers about their loved one's individual needs.



Special Education Advocacy Support

When a child transitions from Early Start into the public school system, it can create a lot of anxiety as parents get acquainted with new and different processes for ensuring their child's needs are met. RCOC regularly offers "Moving on at 3" workshops to help parents understand what to expect during this transition. Still, some families experience difficulties ensuring that their children's needs are met in their public school's special education program. Others tell us they sometimes feel that school district personnel don't listen carefully enough to their concerns. RCOC can help with special education advocacy.

RCOC's experts have a thorough understanding of public school special education, and depending on a family's individual situation special education advocacy can take several forms.

Sometimes, the family's RCOC Service Coordinator may attend the child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meeting, providing support and helping the parent to evaluate their options. When a child's needs are more complex, or school district challenges are greater, the Service Coordinator may consult with RCOC's education specialists.

More recently, RCOC has worked to better leverage its expertise to help more families by hosting free

workshops for parents who want to learn more about the critical transitions from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to an Adult Transition Program. By learning more about things like certificate vs. diploma track and work-based learning, for example, as well as their rights and responsibilities, parents can better ensure their child's IEP continues to be geared around helping them achieve their goals for the future.

If you're experiencing difficulties with your child's special education program or would like to learn more about RCOC's special education workshops, contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.



Events and Activities in the Hispanic Community

Regional Center of Orange County has prepared this insert especially for the individuals and families we serve who are most comfortable communicating in Spanish. These events, programs and activities are presented in Spanish and/or are geared specifically for those in Southern California's Hispanic community. However, some are not funded or endorsed by RCOC and this information is provided as a courtesy. If you know of other opportunities you would like to share with other Spanish speakers, please contact RCOC's Giulia Rodriguez at (714) 558-5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

Success in Special Education Workshop

Presented in Spanish, this Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders workshop is designed to help families become active and knowledgeable Individualized Education Program (IEP) team members. With a focus on collaborating effectively with schools, this workshop is interactive and easy-to-understand. Reservations are required and there is a \$20 fee. However, scholarships are available upon request for families in need of financial assistance. For more information and to RSVP, call Marlene Cuevas at (949) 267-0442.

Tuesday, August 6
6-8 p.m.
Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
2500 Red Hill in Santa Ana

Family Autism Nights at Pretend City

These evening events provide an opportunity for children and their parents/siblings/caretakers to have some fun in an autism-friendly environment with other families. Many community partners who specialize in supporting children on the autism spectrum will be on-hand to enrich your family's play experience with welcoming smiles and practical support. These events are free, but registration is required. Call (949) 428-3900 or visit www.pretendcity.org/autism to reserve your space and receive a confirmation number.

Mondays, August 26, September 30, October 28
5-7:30 p.m.
Pretend City
29 Hubble in Irvine



Movies in the Park

Families are invited to bring lawn chairs and blankets for free movies in the park, taking place throughout August. Fun activities for the entire family begin at 6 p.m. and movies begin at dusk. For more information, call (714) 839-8611.

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Bowers Museum: Free Day for Residents

The Bowers Museum in Santa Ana offers free general admission to all Santa Ana residents on Sundays. Santa Ana residents will need to provide proof of residency through an ID, driver's license or utility bill.

Every Sunday

Bowers Museum

2002 N. Main Street in Santa Ana

Santa Ana Zoo: Free Day for Residents

On the third Sunday of each month, residents of Santa Ana may visit the Santa Ana Zoo for free. Proof of residency, using a driver's license or utility bill is required. Not valid for school or business addresses.

Third Sunday of each month

10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Santa Ana Zoo

1801 E. Chestnut Avenue in Santa Ana



Baby Development: Feeding and Eating Skills

In mid-June, RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center hosted a fun and informative workshop on baby development.

Attended by 10 young mothers and their infants, along

with a grandmother and an aunt, the interactive session included translation for several of the participants and focused on helpful tips on nutrition and on making feeding time easier for parent and child. For information about future workshops at Comfort Connection, contact Giulia Rodriguez at (714) 558-5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.



Avalyn Tucker joined her mother Ana Tucker for the workshop.

Special Education Advocacy Support

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