



Dialogue

Volume 34 No.4
Fall 2020



Spotlight Award Honorees

Like many other aspects of life this year, COVID-19 changed the way Regional Center of Orange County presented its annual Spotlight Awards. This year, instead of a gala dinner-dance, RCOC hosted a virtual event via Zoom on September 10.

Helping to make the event special for honorees and viewers was Michele Gile, the award-winning reporter for CBS2 and KCAL9, who returned for her second year as Spotlight Awards guest emcee! RCOC Board Chair Chip Wright and Executive Director Larry Landauer



Michele Gile

welcomed viewers and Department of Developmental Services Director (DDS) Nancy Bargmann joined the online festivities, helping to celebrate milestones such as the transition of the last residents of Fairview Developmental Center into the community.

In honor of September's Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week, members of Integrity House, the nonprofit organization that has organized past in-person

Spotlight Awards galas, ended the evening with a heartfelt video thanking the workers who play such a critical role in the health and wellbeing of people with developmental disabilities.

Here are brief profiles of the 13 honorees.

Self-Advocate: Robert Armstrong



Robert Armstrong is an active member of Independent Options and serves as the client representative on the Human Rights Committee. In that role, he is a vocal advocate for his peers and others with developmental disabilities. He also is a speaker, sharing his experiences with others in the community about how adults with developmental disabilities can be trusted to make their own informed choices and live quality lives. One of Robert's many goals is to help educate and empower others with disabilities to live more independent lives. He is a role model who leads by example, making sure others know he has his own voice and isn't afraid to speak up.

See **Spotlight Award Honorees**
on page 6.



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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Amy Jessee
Liza Krassner
Sandy Martin
Chinh Nguyen
Fernando Peña

Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Board Meetings

Nov. 5 • Jan. 14 • March 4
May 6 • June 3

As of this printing, decisions had not yet been made about how the next several meetings will take place (in-person or virtual). Please check the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website for the most up-to-date information.

RCOC Administration

Larry Landauer, *Executive Director*
Bette Baber, *Chief Financial Officer*
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Jerrod Bonner, *Information Technology Director*
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Stacy Wong, *Human Resources Director*
Patricia Glancy, *Intake Manager*
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Carie Otto, *West Area Manager*
Arturo Cazares, *Associate Director of Employment*
Jack Stanton, *Associate Director of Housing*
Marta Vasquez, *Associate Finance Director*
Greg Shimada, *Associate Director of Information Technology*

Board Update

Chinh Nguyen Joins RCOC Board

RCOC's Board of Directors has appointed Chinh Nguyen to serve a one-year term on the Board, beginning September 1, 2020. The parent of a child with autism, she is a bilingual advocate for children with special needs, who uses her personal experience to coach other families on how to access services and resources. She also actively works to combat the social stigma associated with disability that prevents some from acknowledging their youngsters' conditions and seeking the RCOC services and supports that can help them thrive.

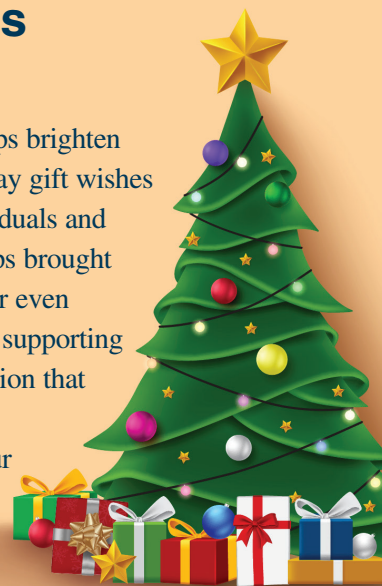
A former reporter, Chinh holds a Bachelor's degree in Communications from California State University, Fullerton and a Master's degree in Organizational Leadership from



Vanguard University. Born in Saigon, she was orphaned at the age of four and later came to the United States as an international student. She has worked in the international student division at Santa Ana College and has more than a decade of experience in community building through running her own tutoring center and helping with grassroots outreach for Vietnamese American political campaigns and the U.S. Census Bureau.

How to Support RCOC's Holiday Wish Tree

Each year, the Wish Tree program helps brighten the holiday season by fulfilling holiday gift wishes for more than 500 low-income individuals and families served by RCOC. Financial hardships brought on by the pandemic will likely make this year even more difficult for many, but you can help by supporting the Wish Tree. To make a financial contribution that will be used by volunteer shoppers to fulfill specific holiday gift wishes, please make your check out to "Brian's Fund" and mail it to RCOC at P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702-2010.



Executive Director's Report

A Good Time to Show Our Appreciation

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

We were all disappointed this past spring, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced RCOC to cancel the Spotlight Awards dinner-dance. However, as many who joined in told us, September's virtual event was still a wonderful opportunity to celebrate some major milestones from 2019 and honor some amazing people who give so much of themselves to serve people with developmental disabilities.



brought to emceeding the event made both honorees and viewers feel incredibly special. I was also touched by the short video that Integrity House members put together to celebrate

Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week and acknowledge those whose caring support is so crucial to people with disabilities.

That video and of course

the recounting of our honorees' extraordinary work and achievements were vivid reminders that, decades later, California's Lanterman Act and the regional center system of community care it created are still unique and remarkable.

a success story. Our system has proven itself capable of responding, evolving and innovating in ways that simply aren't possible for large government bureaucracies. It's also proven incredibly durable, managing to survive and be there for the people we serve, in spite of long periods of underfunding.

That, I believe, is entirely due to the people who do this work – not because of the awards they might receive – but because it is their passion, and in many cases their life's mission, to serve.

NOTE: To view the recording of the Spotlight Awards virtual event, go to RCOC's home page, and then click on the 2020 Spotlight Awards link under the News & Events tab.

California's Lanterman Act and the regional center system of community care it created are still unique and remarkable.

The event also provided some normalcy and a nice break from the pressures of the pandemic. As discussed in our Everyday Wellness story on page 5, doing what we can to safely maintain cherished traditions and express gratitude for the good things in our lives are excellent ways to boost emotional well-being in tough times.

There were many highlights in this year's Spotlight Awards. Certainly, the genuine interest and enthusiasm that our guest Michele Gile again

The past couple of issues of this newsletter have shared some of the ways our Orange County community has pulled together to cope with the pandemic. I won't minimize the hardships brought on by social distancing, business closures and life and job losses, and the disruptions to individual and family routines. These are significant, and we are all hopeful for a speedy return to normal life. At the same time, I am proud of how we've been able to continue meeting people's needs under such challenging circumstances. The system has worked.

The Lanterman Act's vision of locally-run, private non-profit regional centers partnering with local service providers (many of them also non-profit organizations) to serve individuals in their communities is



Do you know someone who deserves a Spotlight Award? Go to RCOC's website to submit your nomination online before the **January 15, 2021** deadline! Persons served can contact their RCOC Service Coordinator for help completing the form. Check our website and social media for details on the awards presentation, which will take place in spring 2021.

Person to Person

Transition: It's about YOU!

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair and
Jyusse Corey, RCOC Peer Advocate

The things we've all had to do to keep people safe from COVID-19 have put a lot of people's plans on hold. That included many of the plans made by young adults looking to transition from public school services to adult services through RCOC. While RCOC still made referrals, most service providers weren't equipped to perform assessments and get new services underway.

Goals still matter, dreams still matter, and choices still matter.

We hope that by the time this newsletter arrives, those things will be starting to happen



again. But no matter what, we encourage young people to think about the future -- because



Sylvia Delgado



Jyusse Corey

goals still matter, dreams still matter, and choices still matter. RCOC's "Ask the Experts" series (see related story) shows that we can still learn about options for the future, while doing what we need to do to stay safe.

When you've been in the school system for so many years, transition can feel overwhelming. But it's important to think about things like where you'd like to live, whether you'd like to go to work right away or continue your education, and what will make you happy.

Sylvia knew she didn't want to go to college after graduating from high school. She wanted a job, so she called her Service Coordinator to see what she needed to do. That was years ago, so it was totally different for her than it is for today's young people, especially since we now have person centered thinking guiding the process. And though she knows it's

not always easy, she believes everyone can transition into something that fits them.

Remember, it's not just about transitioning from program to program or from school to work, it's about your life!

"Ask the Experts" Zoom Conversations

RCOC recommends that families start thinking about transition long before they begin partnering with their school on a formal Individual Transition Plan (ITP). These free, one-hour "Ask the Experts" sessions can help. Taking place virtually via Zoom video conferencing, they're led by a diverse range of parents and professionals and include time for questions and answers. Dozens of topics are offered, from employment and independent living programs to affordable housing, college education programs, and much more. For a complete schedule and registration information, contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.

Resilience for a Different Type of Holiday Season

The holiday season is traditionally a time of shared celebration, with close friends and extended family often traveling to one another's homes to visit, exchange gifts, and enjoy festive meals together. While pandemic-related safety concerns mean that will not be possible for most people this year, that doesn't mean families should skip or postpone these celebrations. In fact, holiday-related expressions of gratitude and continued observance of faith traditions can help cultivate close, loving relationships and combat the social isolation and loneliness many have struggled with throughout the pandemic.

Many families and houses of worship have already become skilled at using video chat platforms like Zoom and FaceTime to connect with one another and live-stream religious services. Whether using these technology tools or simply reaching out by phone to speak with loved ones outside

your immediate household, make an effort to truly listen and engage with the other person -- these types of meaningful social interactions deepen relationships that can be sources of strength and support long after the holidays.

During very stressful times, self-care is also critical. When we take care of ourselves -- physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually -- we are better able to help and care for others. And, when we're not able to participate in familiar holiday traditions, we have opportunities to create new traditions and memories. This could, for example, be the perfect time to try new holiday recipes or plan holiday movie nights -- both of which can be shared with loved ones over video. Great joy can also be had by creating handmade gifts for family and friends, which can be fun and keep the family safe from crowded stores.

Behavior Management Workshops

Due to the holidays, there will be no Behavior Management Workshops beginning in November or December. The workshops will resume after the first of the year. For the most up-to-date information, visit the Monthly Calendar on the RCOC website (www.rcocdd.com).

Giving to others can be very gratifying, and with so many in our community feeling the impact of the pandemic, some local charities and food banks have had difficulty keeping up. If you have the means, even a small contribution can make a big difference for a struggling family.

This year will likely be different for many of us. While feelings of disappointment, worry and frustration are all normal responses to not being able to celebrate as we usually do, they don't have to ruin the season. By actively working to counter negative emotions with positive ones -- for example, feeling disappointed but pressing for gratitude -- we can all build resilience that can enable us to better handle stress and experience greater joy this holiday season.



E. Kurt Yeager Servant Leadership: Alan Martin

Alan Martin's son was a catalyst to his connection to RCOC, which he served as a valued member of the Board of Directors for nearly 14 years, six years of that as Board Chair. Alan's calm demeanor and thoughtful insights provided steady and inclusive leadership



Alan Martin

to the Board, helping to ensure that the Lanterman Act's promises are fulfilled, not only for his son, but for all those served by RCOC. As busy as he is as an attorney and partner at one of the nation's largest and most respected law firms, Alan is one of his son's greatest supporters. He has even been known to assist his son at his restaurant kitchen job, when his son's job coach was out sick.

Direct Support Professional: Sandy Palacios

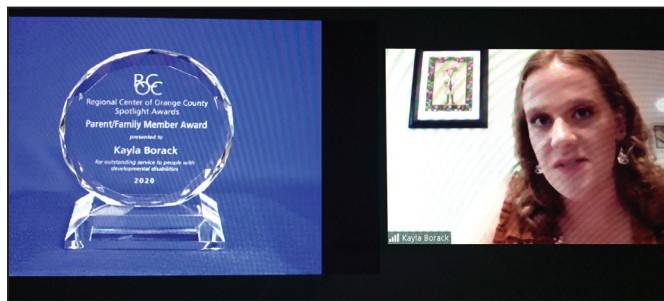
Sandy Palacios' coworkers at Discovery Day Program describe her as the epitome of a true humble servant, greeting everyone with a warm smile and encouraging words that create an uplifting and energetic environment. A dedicated caregiver who never fails to assist someone in need, she jumps right in and gets things done without looking for praise or recognition. She especially radiates joy when supporting people in the exercise program, singing, dancing and having fun alongside them as they work out together. Her enthusiasm is contagious, as she takes the time to get to know every person's needs, making them feel important, seen and special.

Service Provider: Abilities Unlimited

Under the direction of owner Rick Perez, Abilities Unlimited has been providing high quality adult behavior management day program services for over 10 years.

Most recently, Abilities Unlimited responded to a unique need – helping to support the last Fairview Developmental Center residents transitioning into the community. This service provider developed a specialized program, tailored for residents with significant behavioral challenges, which has been instrumental in helping these adults adjust to integrated life in the community.

Family Member: Kayla Borack

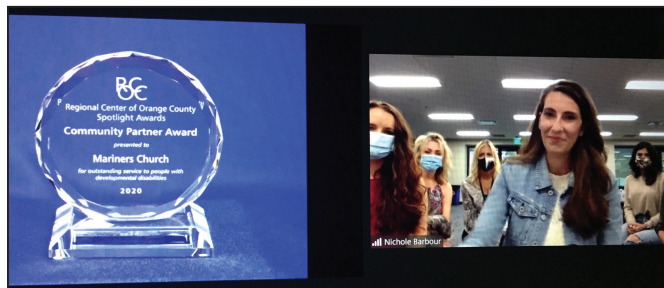


Kayla Borack

Currently a student at Cal State Long Beach, 21-year-old Kayla Borack was inspired to pursue a career in special education by spending time with her uncle, Gary, who has a developmental disability, and her grandmother, a tireless advocate for Gary and others. Kayla's service to those with disabilities has been considerable and includes being a peer tutor in high school and leading a campus club which promoted independence, positive interactions and good communication between students with disabilities and others. She has also volunteered for the Special Olympics and is on Fountain Valley's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

Community Partner: Mariners Church

Mariners Church was honored for its Exceptional Families program which aims to include those with special needs with their typical peers, providing adults and children the



Nichole Barbour of Mariners Church

opportunity to socialize in a safe, positive setting, and to make friends and learn new skills in an environment where everyone feels like they belong. Due to COVID restrictions, they've had to change their programming, but when they were nominated late last year, Mariners Church was hosting a Saturday Game Night and a free Exceptional Days program for adults to enjoy crafts, games, yoga, talent shows, dancing, social skills, money skills, and academic skills.

RCOC Achievement: Arturo Cazares

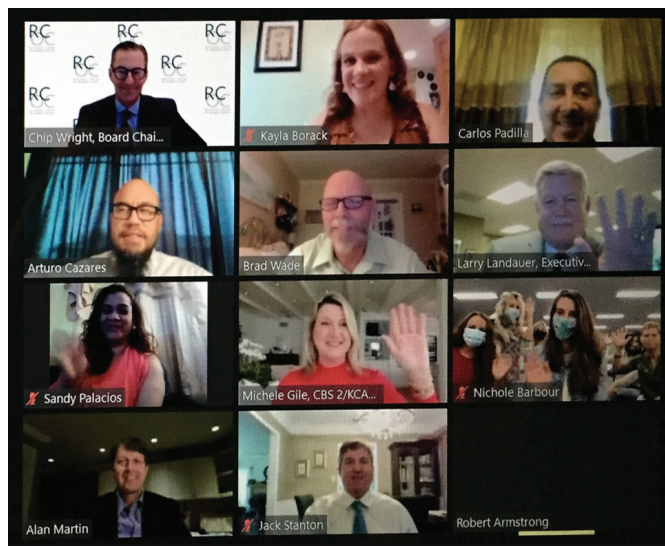
RCOC's Associate Director of Housing Arturo Cazares leads the team that works with service providers to develop new day programs and activities, and also monitors current programs. He was honored for his exceptional work collaborating on new programs to meet the needs of people moving out of Fairview Developmental Center, as well as his invaluable contributions toward the development of new work programs to take the place of sheltered workshops and other large, site-based programs.

RCOC Achievement: Jack Stanton

RCOC's Associate Director of Housing Jack Stanton oversees development and monitoring of living options, ranging from group homes to independent living and supported living programs. He was honored for his extraordinary efforts to purchase and renovate 19 specialized homes in Orange County for medically-fragile residents transitioning out of Fairview Developmental Center, as well as his work with service providers to meet the residents' complex needs, and community efforts to help ensure the homes' residents were welcomed by their new neighbors.

Employer: City of Westminster Public Works Department

The City of Westminster's Public Works Department was honored for being a role model for other employers, as it worked with service provider Goodwill of Orange County to employ six adults with developmental disabilities to keep 13 city parks clean. The work involved picking up trash and emptying trash containers, cleaning restrooms, and maintaining cleanliness in parking lots. In addition to providing meaningful work, Brad Wade, the City's Public Works Supervisor, and the entire Westminster team provided a warm and welcoming work environment for these adults.



Employer: Grand Legacy at the Park Hotel

The Grand Legacy at the Park Hotel was honored for employing people RCOC serves and for providing valuable skills training in the hospitality sector. Owner Brandon Garr began a partnership with service provider My Day Counts with three participants learning to do carpet cleaning in guest rooms and hallways, but the program grew to include training in grounds maintenance, room service, administrative services, laundry, customer service and more. More than two dozen people have received training, 11 of whom have been successfully placed in paid jobs.

Healthcare Professional: Continental Post Acute

Ray and Leilani Libang of Continental Post Acute (CPA) were honored for their outstanding work developing and staffing specialized homes for 20 medically fragile residents transitioning from Fairview Developmental Center into the community. The couple devoted years to collaborative planning with family members, RCOC, DDS, and Fairview staff, as well as CPA staff training to ensure a safe and smooth transition for each person. Every step of the way, their care, compassion and professionalism earned Ray and Leilani the respect of families and colleagues.

Legislative Support: Nicole Vasquez

Nicole Vasquez, Deputy Chief Consultant to the Assembly Budget Committee, is responsible for the fiscal analysis

See **Spotlight Award Honorees** on back.

INSIDE

Spotlight Award Honorees.....	1
Board Update.....	2
How to Support RCOC's Holiday Wish Tree	2
Executive Director's Report.....	3
Person to Person.....	4
"Ask the Experts" Zoom Conversations	4
Everyday Wellness: Resilience for a Different Type of Holiday Season	5
Behavior Management Workshops.....	5

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

Spotlight Award Honorees (continued from page 7)

of many State programs, including the Department of Developmental Services which oversees regional centers. By taking the time to go out into the community to visit programs, meet persons served and connect with them about their needs, Nicole has developed a deep understanding of the regional center system. She has used that knowledge to inform her analyses and recommendations to the Legislature, helping to secure essential funding for developmental services.

Lifetime Achievement: Creola Howard

Creola Howard dedicated her life to working with people with disabilities, starting with United Cerebral Palsy in 1966 – wearing many hats, from classroom assistant and

receptionist, to bookkeeper and direct care supervisor. Every day until her recent retirement, she could be counted on to do whatever was needed to help. She enriched people's lives by encouraging them to feel capable and by setting high, but realistic expectations for them to reach toward and grow. She also worked to help parents see their adult children with disabilities as true adults who can make decisions, and have their own thoughts and feelings about things.





Serving Orange County's 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 Vietnamese. In this issue, we would normally share details about holiday programs and community activities that families normally enjoy this time of year. Unfortunately, most of those have either been canceled due to health concerns related to COVID-19, or decisions had not yet been made at the time of printing.

COVID-19 Resources and Information

RCOC has posted authoritative and up-to-date information on its website and social media pages regarding COVID-19; however, since some of these materials are presented in English only, Vietnamese speakers with questions or concerns are invited to reach out directly to their RCOC Service Coordinator who is always here to help.

Special Education Advocacy Support

With Orange County's public schools back in session, we hope that parents are satisfied with the arrangements schools have made to serve their children with special needs during these difficult times. While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented particular challenges for education, the federal government has made it clear that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is still in effect. Passed in 1975, the IDEA requires public schools to provide a free and appropriate education to all children, regardless of the type or severity of a child's disability.

The IDEA requires public schools to provide a free and appropriate education to all children.

If you are concerned about how the school is meeting your child's education needs, RCOC encourages you to reach out to your child's

teacher directly to share your concerns. Most teachers care deeply about their students' well-being and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with parents to help children in their classes succeed.

Most teachers care deeply about their students' well-being.

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 the processes used to assess a child's needs and determine the specific components of a child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan). As such, special education advocacy

from RCOC can take several forms, depending on a family's individual situation.

Sometimes, the family's RCOC Service Coordinator may attend the child's IEP meeting, providing support and helping the parents to evaluate their options. This can be particularly helpful for parents who are new to public school special education.

Special education advocacy from RCOC can take several forms, depending on a family's individual situation.

When a child's needs are more complex, or school district challenges are greater, the Service Coordinator may consult with RCOC's education specialists to help find solutions.

If you're experiencing difficulties with your child's special education program and need help, please feel free to contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.

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Health Tips for Large or Extended Families

Even when there is a vaccine for COVID-19, health experts tell us that many families will benefit from continuing to practice several of the health tips recommended to fight the pandemic. That's because many of these practices – such as isolating a person who is sick – are also helpful for preventing the spread of other illnesses like colds and flu, which can cause serious complications for seniors and others who are at higher risk.



Since many in our Orange County community live in larger households, often with extended family, we're sharing the following tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) "Guidance for Large or Extended Families Living in the Same Household." For more detailed information, please visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

How to Isolate a Sick Household Member When Household Space is Limited

If you cannot provide a separate room and bathroom for someone who is sick, try to separate the person from other household members and follow these tips:

1. **Keep six feet between the person who is sick and other household members.**
2. **Cover coughs and sneezes; wash hands often; and don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
3. **Have the sick household member wear a mask when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor's office).** However, masks should not be placed on children under age two, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is not able to remove the covering without help.
4. **Keep people at higher risk separated from anyone who is sick.**



5. **Have only one person in the household take care of the person who is sick.** This caregiver should be someone who is not at higher risk for severe illness.

- The caregiver should clean where the sick person has been, as well as the person's bedding and laundry.
- The caregiver should minimize contact with other people in the household, especially those who are at higher risk for severe illness.
- Have one caregiver for the person who is sick and a different caregiver for other members of the household who require help with cleaning, bathing, or other daily tasks.

6. **Clean and disinfect surfaces, doorknobs, and other commonly touched surfaces** with EPA-registered disinfectants daily. Find a list here: www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2.



7. **Limit visitors to those with an essential need to be in the home.**
8. **Don't share personal items like phones, dishes, bedding, or toys.**
9. **Try to do the following if you need to share a bedroom with someone who is sick:**
 - Make sure the room has good air flow. Open a window and turn on a fan to bring in fresh air. Place beds at least six feet apart, if possible.
 - Sleep head to toe.
 - Put a curtain around or place another physical divider to separate the bed of the person who is sick from other beds. For example, you might use a shower curtain, room screen divider, large cardboard poster board, quilt, or large bedspread.
10. **Have the person who is sick clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in a shared bathroom.** If this is not possible, others who share the bathroom should wait as long as possible after the sick person uses the

bathroom before entering it to clean and disinfect or to use the bathroom. Make sure the room has good air flow. Open a window and turn on a fan (if possible) to bring in and circulate fresh air.

How to Eat Meals Together and Feed a Household Member Who is Sick

If possible, make a plate for the sick household member to eat in the separate area they are staying in. If they cannot eat in the separate area they are staying in, the person should stay at least six feet away from other members of the household during meals or eat at a different time than others in the household. Also, follow these tips:

1. **Don't help prepare food if you are sick.**
2. **Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before eating.** This includes everyone in the household.
3. **Use clean utensils when placing food on every household member's plate.**
4. **Don't eat from the same dishes or use the same utensils as someone else in the household.**
5. **Wear gloves to handle dishes, drinking glasses, and utensils, if possible.** Also, wash these non-disposable items with hot water and soap or in a dishwasher after you use them.
6. **Have only one person bring food to the sick person and clean-up the sick person's food service items.** This should be someone who is not at higher risk for severe illness.
7. **Wash your hands after handling used food service items.**



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Serving Orange County's Hispanic Community

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 - Sleep head to toe.
 - Put a curtain around or place another physical divider to separate the bed of the person who is sick from other beds. For example, you might use a shower curtain, room screen divider, large cardboard poster board, quilt, or large bedspread.
10. **Have the person who is sick clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in a shared bathroom.** If this is not possible, others who share the bathroom should wait as long as possible after the sick person uses the

bathroom before entering it to clean and disinfect or to use the bathroom. Make sure the room has good air flow. Open a window and turn on a fan (if possible) to bring in and circulate fresh air.

How to Eat Meals Together and Feed a Household Member Who is Sick

If possible, make a plate for the sick household member to eat in the separate area they are staying in. If they cannot eat in the separate area they are staying in, the person should stay at least six feet away from other members of the household during meals or eat at a different time than others in the household. Also, follow these tips:

1. **Don't help prepare food if you are sick.**
2. **Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before eating.** This includes everyone in the household.
3. **Use clean utensils when placing food on every household member's plate.**
4. **Don't eat from the same dishes or use the same utensils as someone else in the household.**
5. **Wear gloves to handle dishes, drinking glasses, and utensils, if possible.** Also, wash these non-disposable items with hot water and soap or in a dishwasher after you use them.
6. **Have only one person bring food to the sick person and clean-up the sick person's food service items.** This should be someone who is not at higher risk for severe illness.
7. **Wash your hands after handling used food service items.**



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention