

# RCOC Dialogue

Volume 35 No.2

Spring 2021



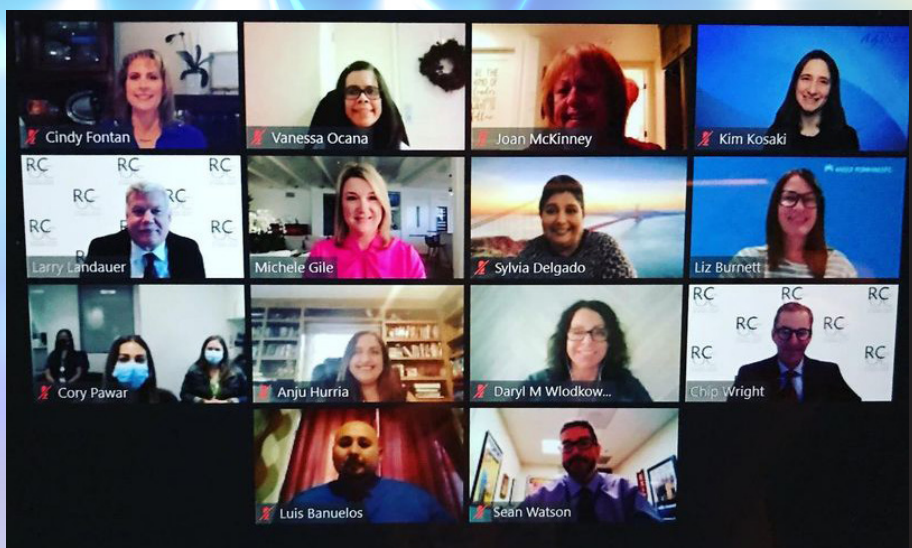
## 2021 Spotlight Award Honorees

Since it was not yet safe to host large, in-person events like Regional Center of Orange County's typical Spotlight Awards dinner-dance, more than 200 members of our community instead gathered via Zoom for the virtual award presentations that took place on March 8. RCOC Board Chair Larry Landauer welcomed viewers and Department of Developmental Services Director Nancy Bargmann also shared celebratory remarks. A highlight of the evening for all attendees was special guest emcee Michele Gile, the Emmy Award-winning reporter for CBS2/KCAL9, who recounted each honoree's achievements with incredible warmth and genuine enthusiasm.

Here are brief snapshots about the nine honorees.

### Self-Advocate: Vanessa Ocana, MFT

A person served by RCOC who has cerebral palsy, Vanessa Ocana was honored for bringing greater awareness and recognition of the abilities of people with developmental disabilities in Orange County. Vanessa, who has earned a Bachelor's degree in psychology and a Master's in marriage and family therapy, is



This year's Spotlight Awards were presented virtually, with hosts and recipients participating via Zoom.

a long-time volunteer with Best Buddies of Orange County. Team captain for Best Buddies at UCI and a volunteer activities coordinator, Vanessa recently co-facilitated a Best Buddies ambassador training event and was able to share her story and speak in front of others to advocate

for Best Buddies and people with disabilities. She also completed her first speaking engagement at a high school to encourage students to join Best Buddies and participate in the organization's Friendship Walks. A true advocate for herself and others, Vanessa exudes positivity and is an outstanding role model.



Vanessa Ocana

### Direct Support Professional: Luis Banuelos

An employment training specialist with Goodwill of Orange County, Luis Banuelos works at the Camp Pendleton Marine Base where he is responsible for overseeing one of Goodwill's four supported employment groups at the base. He

See 2021 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](http://www.rcocdd.com).

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Fernando Peña

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Board Meetings

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*  
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## Self Determination Program Update

In June 2021, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Self Determination Program (SDP) pilot program will become available to any persons served who choose it. While the pilot had originally been envisioned as accommodating 2,500 individuals at this point, as of February 2021 just 499 people statewide – 20 of them in Orange County – had completed all of the steps



DDS requires for them to receive services through SDP. These steps include completing an orientation, development and certification of an individual budget, completing a spending plan, obtaining a financial management service provider, and initiating services.

If you're interested in learning more about the program, visit RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)) and click on the Self Determination Program link under the RCOC Services tab. For the latest information, visit the DDS website at [www.dds.ca.gov/SDP](http://www.dds.ca.gov/SDP).



## Engage with RCOC on Social Media

Follow RCOC on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram and 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.

During emergencies and evolving situations such as the pandemic, our social media pages and website often provide the most up-to-date information about RCOC services. Whenever possible, we provide information in Spanish and Vietnamese, as well as English. In addition, our website features a convenient translation tool – simply scroll down to the bottom of any page and you'll find the translator on the right hand side.

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

### Why Regional Centers are Private, Nonprofit Organizations

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

**D**o you ever wonder why California's statewide network of 21 regional centers are private, nonprofit organizations, rather than simply branch offices of the State's Department of Developmental Services?

One doesn't have to dig very deep to see the genius behind the Lanterman Act's insistence on structuring the regional center system of community care as separate from government. The past year's experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic provides a vivid reminder of the essential principles that underpin the Lanterman Act promise.

#### Local Needs Matter

In a state as large and diverse as ours, it's simply impossible for any government agency – no matter how well-meaning and well-managed – to respond effectively to the individual and intensely personal needs of the more than 350,000 Californians with developmental disabilities and their families.

So, RCOC and our sister regional centers have partnered with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) throughout the

pandemic – each doing what we do best. DDS issued many essential directives that helped us sustain our service provider networks, while also



allowing us great flexibility to ensure health and safety were protected, and staff could be deployed as efficiently as possible during the crisis.

Importantly, those DDS directives enabled us to tap RCOC's deep understanding of our local community and our strong, collaborative relationships with our more than 1,700 service providers to identify and meet a multitude of new, pandemic-related needs and ensure that ongoing individual and family needs also continued to be met.

On a statewide level, California's 21 regional centers also collectively distributed more than 25 million state-provided masks, gowns, hand sanitizer and other personal protective equipment items to members of our developmental services community.

#### Accountability Matters

While lots of government-provided services struggled for many months to adjust to the pandemic environment, and some still were not fully up-and-running when this newsletter went to print, every aspect of RCOC has been fully operational since the first days of the pandemic lockdowns. From intake and assessment, to service coordination, service monitoring and accounting, our team has continued

to ensure essential services are in place and service providers receive payment, even while their own families have also been impacted by school and business closures.

Our long-standing embrace of technology meant RCOC was better positioned than many to quickly transition to remote work. However, even our technology innovations sprang not from a state mandate, but from our local mandate of accountability to the people we serve and RCOC's own volunteer Board of Directors. While countless government technology projects have been legendary for budget over-runs, missed deadlines and simply not performing, our locally developed Virtual Chart technology has been a model of efficient, continuous, and cost-effective innovation.

#### People Come First

No one knows better than the individuals and families we serve that the Lanterman Act promise rests on the availability of caring, professional service providers who put the needs of people with developmental disabilities first. The overwhelming majority of these service providers are small businesses. Most lack the administrative resources to be state contractors but are quite capable of working effectively with their local regional center which, in turn, contracts with and is accountable to the State.

It's a system that works, and COVID-19 provided a timely reminder of why it works so well.

## Person to Person

### Getting Back to Work!

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

**C**an you believe it's been a little over a year since the pandemic caused some, like Jyusse, to begin working from home and others, like Sylvia, to have to stop work entirely? We all thought COVID-19 would go away in a week or two, then we'd all be back to work.

When that didn't happen, Jyusse took the opportunity to search for new ways to contribute to RCOC while he worked from home.

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*We all thought  
COVID-19 would go away  
in a week or two.*

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Unfortunately, that wasn't possible for Sylvia, so nobody was more thrilled than her to get word she could finally go back to work, earn money and be around other people. She even counted the days! Her first day back to work was January 27. Before that, she was out of work for 10 months and 15 days. When her doctor

finally released her to work, he insisted she couldn't be on her feet for too many hours



Sylvia Delgado



Jyusse Corey

at a time due to a non-COVID health issue. In the past, her work at public events had her on her feet a lot, so she was very happy when her employer's human resources department was able to place her in a great new position as a

COVID-19 screener for a local hospital. In this job, she is able to sit during most of her shift.

For her, being back to work now is a new beginning:  
*a new year and a new me!*

Both Sylvia and Jyusse know that it's still difficult for lots of people who want to work to get jobs right now. But just because things are very slow in the job market does not mean your goals should change. There are still things you can do, like talking with your RCOC Service Coordinator about your goal of going back to work. You can also work on your resume, practice doing job interviews, and maybe learn some new job skills.

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*Being back to work now  
is a new beginning.*

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And remember to stay positive. Just thinking about getting back to work and setting that as a goal are great first steps!

### Learn More About CalOptima

**E**ven families that have other health insurance coverage may be able to benefit from CalOptima, which provides health insurance for Orange County's low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities. For details about the virtual presentations RCOC is hosting on June 8 (English), June 9 (Spanish) or June 16 (Vietnamese), check the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)).



A Public Agency

**CalOptima**  
Better. Together.

## Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

**T**hese workshops are free for parents, and are being offered via videoconferencing (rather than in-person) due to the pandemic. They cover basic 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. Contact your Service Coordinator or Tracy Vaughan at (714) 796-5223 or tvaughan@rcocdd.com for additional information, and to register.

### **Presented in Spanish by Advanced Behavioral Health**

**When:** Thursday evenings – Aug. 26, Sept. 2, Sept. 9, Sept. 16 and Sept. 23

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

### **Presented in Vietnamese by Footprints**

**When:** Thursday evenings – Sept. 30, Oct. 7, Oct. 14, Oct. 21 and Oct. 28

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

## Everyday Wellness Tip

### Drink Plenty of Water

**W**hen the hot summer months arrive, there's nothing quite as refreshing as a tall glass of cool water, but drinking plenty of water is important all year-round and has lots of health benefits.

If you're trying to lose weight, water is a great replacement for soda, juices and other high calorie drinks, because it has no sugar. Water also boosts your metabolism, so you burn more calories. It also improves blood circulation and helps keep your digestive system healthy. Drinking lots of water is also a good idea if you want look your best, because it promotes healthy hair growth and a healthier, glowing complexion.

How much water you need depends on many things, including your health status and medications you may be taking. Check out this chart to get a general idea of how much water a person of your body weight should be drinking each day.

| DAILY WATER INTAKE |         |              |
|--------------------|---------|--------------|
| Weight             | Water   | Water bottle |
| 80 lbs             | 40 oz.  | 2            |
| 100 lbs            | 50 oz.  | 3            |
| 120 lbs            | 60 oz.  | 4            |
| 140 lbs            | 70 oz.  | 4            |
| 160 lbs            | 80 oz.  | 5            |
| 180 lbs            | 90 oz.  | 5            |
| 200 lbs            | 100 oz. | 6            |
| 220 lbs            | 110 oz. | 7            |
| 240 lbs            | 120 oz. | 7            |
| 260 lbs            | 130 oz. | 8            |
| 280 lbs            | 140 oz. | 8            |
| 300 lbs            | 150 oz. | 9            |
| 330 lbs            | 160 oz. | 10           |

## Moving on at 3 Transition Workshop for Parents

**E**very family with a child in Early Start receives transition services to help prepare for the changes that will take place when the child turns three years old and Early Start services end. Many parents say this support is invaluable in helping them understand the differences between Early Start and the services children with special needs receive from public school districts from the age of three through age 22.

The next RCOC-hosted workshop on transition will take place virtually on **Thursday, June 10 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.** To register online, go to the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)) and click on the event listing.

This workshop is presented in English, however, Spanish or Vietnamese translation can be provided, if requested in advance. For more information and for help with online registration, please contact Patricia Garcia at (714) 558-5400 or pgarcia@rcocdd.com.



Luis Banuelos (left) and person served John Wong

has been with Goodwill for 15 years and has a deep love and compassion for people with disabilities, serving as a dedicated mentor and advocate. While Luis has worked at Camp Pendleton, his team received 15 Employee of the Month certificates, 20 Extra Mile certificates, and six certificates for outstanding work performance achievement. He is also responsible for securing three additional supported employment groups at the job site which resulted in nine new jobs. Luis has continued to work alongside his team throughout the pandemic, taking pride in supporting the men and women of our military, while keeping the health and safety of his team as his top priority.

### **Service Provider: ASPIRE Creative Arts Program**

ASPIRE was a forerunner in adapting to the pandemic environment. When in-person programs



Kim Kosaki

had to stop, owner-founder Kim Kosaki and her team quickly found ways to adapt, enabling persons served to stay connected with friends and program staff. They delivered art supplies and kits that were used in conjunction with virtual tutorials with the support of in-home staff. ASPIRE has also continued to make sure that program participants, families, and other community partners could continue to enjoy long-time ASPIRE traditions, such as their Christmas Performance, through which program participants share their talents and gifts with others. Despite having taken their entire creative arts program virtual, ASPIRE has continued to create intimate, family-like environments where everyone is genuinely and equally valued.

### **Family Member: Cindy Fontan**

Cindy Fontan is a long-time, dedicated advocate for her daughter, who is served by RCOC, and for others as well. She has, for example, been proactive in finding opportunities that match her daughter's interests and abilities,



Cindy Fontan

helping her to obtain a paid internship at a local preschool. Cindy has also been successful in bringing people together to work collaboratively to benefit all people with developmental disabilities, having personally compiled an email distribution list that includes community partners, policy influencers, parent and family advocates to share information. Most recently, she mobilized her list members to encourage lawmakers to provide COVID-19 vaccine priority for those with developmental disabilities.

### **Community Partner: City of Irvine Disability Services**

City of Irvine Disability Services (IDS) provides support services and social programs to persons with disabilities, their families, caregivers, and providers in an

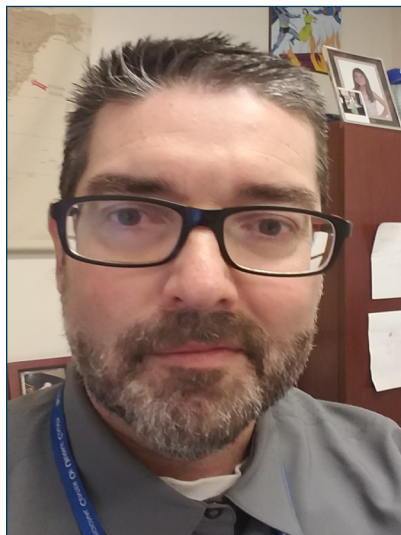


environment that promotes inclusion, social interaction, enrichment and skills development. As the pandemic set in, IDS successfully restructured many existing programs like Adaptive Yoga and Game Night to take

place virtually. They also developed new classes and by the end of 2020 had over 100 virtual programs serving more than 950 participants, expanding opportunities for many who typically would not have signed up for their classes, such as older adults joining art classes and typical and neuro-typical kids logging on to the Junior Chefs virtual class.

## RCOC Achievement: Sean Watson

Sean Watson manages RCOC's Quality Assurance Risk Management group where he oversees a team that monitors licensed residential facilities and investigates reports of alleged abuse, neglect or violations of rights. During this past year, Sean and his team were faced with a whole new



Sean Watson

set of challenges due to the pandemic. With his leadership, his team was able to ensure critical services remained intact, working alongside service providers to make sure programs maintained high quality standards, and safeguarding health and safety by guiding the distribution of thousands of masks, face shields, gowns and other items for direct care workers. Always placing the needs of people served by RCOC first, Sean aims to achieve fairness in vendor issues while ensuring each individual's safety and well-being.



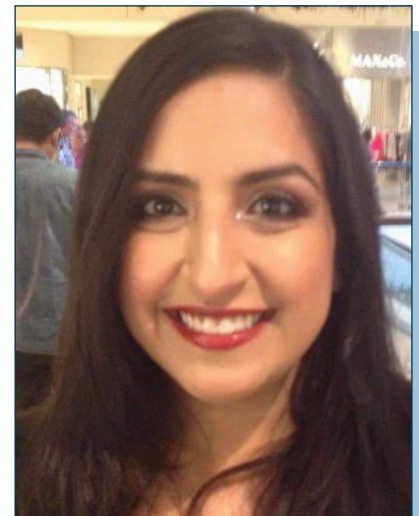
## Employer: Kaiser Permanente

In 2019, Kaiser Permanente of Orange County opened the doors of its Anaheim Medical Center to a Project

SEARCH internship program for adults served by RCOC, securing buy-in from more than 12 departments to assure the interns would have diverse, challenging and meaningful experiences. Although Kaiser has been a long-time employer for many people served by RCOC, the development of this program has strengthened the organization's commitment and set it apart as a leader. Despite the first program year being cut short by the pandemic, five of the 10 interns have new jobs: one was hired by Kaiser Permanente, a second works in a different hospital setting, and two are employed in roles that use skills developed during their internships.

## Healthcare Professional: Anju Hurria, M.D.

Dr. Anju Hurria is an exceptional provider who serves as an Associate Clinical Professor in UCI Medical School's Department of Psychiatry. Whenever RCOC has a particularly challenging situation, with someone who has not done well with other psychiatrists, a consultation with



Anju Hurria, M.D.

Dr. Hurria is requested and inevitably the person benefits greatly from her recommendations. A fierce patient advocate, she has made invaluable suggestions to improve the quality of life for group home residents. She has also

**2021 Spotlight Award Honorees** (continued on back)

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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

### 2021 Spotlight Award Honorees (continued from page 7)

enabled better training for medical students and psychiatry residents on the care of people with developmental disabilities by starting a clinic for adults with autism and intellectual disabilities where two psychiatry residents at a time gain essential, real world experience working with people RCOC serves.

### Lifetime Achievement: Joan McKinney

Joan McKinney became Executive Director of Elwyn California in 1978 and served that agency for almost 35 years before transitioning in 2013 to her current role as Executive Director of Vocational Visions. During her first few years at Vocational Visions, Joan made important changes that benefitted all program participants, including the closure of the larger center-based work activity

program – transitioning services toward more community integration and more opportunities for adults to engage in competitive integrated employment. Her career has been distinguished by creativity and innovation and an unerring focus on making life better for people. A passionate advocate, thought leader, and change agent, she is always quick to help other organizations and share her dream of a more equitable life for all.



Joan McKinney



## Serving Orange County's Vietnamese Community

**R**egional 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 Yen Truong at (714) 558-5405 or [ktuong@rcocdd.com](mailto:ktuong@rcocdd.com).

### Virtual Coffee Talk: July 29, 10-11:30 a.m.

Join RCOC Cultural Specialist Kaitlynn Yen Truong and other Vietnamese-speaking parents for this informal conversation via Zoom. Discussion topics change, depending on needs and interests, and can include COVID-19 updates, helping your family cope with pandemic stresses, RCOC services, special education and more. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at (714) 558-5405 or [ktuong@rcocdd.com](mailto:ktuong@rcocdd.com).

### Learn More About CalOptima

**E**ven families that have other health insurance coverage may be able to benefit from CalOptima, which provides health insurance for Orange County's low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities.

In this free virtual event, hosted by RCOC and presented in Vietnamese by CalOptima Senior Community Relations Specialist Lisa Nguyen, you'll learn about a variety of little-known benefits such as transportation to medical appointments, tele-health options, behavioral health services, mail-in pharmacy, and more. She will also talk about the benefits of using CalOptima as a secondary medical plan, offer tips on how to enroll without causing confusion with a family's primary medical plan, and share resources for getting additional help and information.

Wednesday, June 16  
6:30-8 p.m.

To view the event flyer and information on how to register for the virtual presentation, check the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)).

### Updated Recreation Resource Guide

**A**s more people receive COVID-19 vaccines, a number of summer recreation programs serving children and adults with developmental disabilities are slowly reopening for in-person activities. With this in mind, RCOC's Recreation Resource Guide is being updated to reflect the most current information available. Download the Vietnamese-language version of the Guide from RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)) by clicking on the Resources for Children and Families quick link on the home page.

### Vietnamese Service Provider Fairs

**L**earn more about services and supports available for your loved one and meet the Vietnamese-speaking service providers who can help with respite, behavior services, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, employment services, day programs, living options and more. Also meet community partners that offer legal, mental health and other helpful services.

Early Start families: June 17, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Families with school age children:  
June 24, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Families with adult children:  
July 1, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

For details and to RSVP, please contact RCOC Cultural Specialist Kaitlynn Yen Truong at (714) 558-5405 or [ktuong@rcocdd.com](mailto:ktuong@rcocdd.com).

(continued on back)

# Employment Services for Adults



A paying job in the community can instill self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment and purpose for adults with or without disabilities. This is one of the reasons the State of California and RCOC have both adopted Employment First policies, which mandate that we explore competitive, integrated employment as the first option for the working-age adults we serve.

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## *The State of California and RCOC have both adopted Employment First policies*

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Though regional centers across the state are challenged to secure competitive, integrated employment for all of the adults with developmental disabilities who want jobs, RCOC and our community's employment service providers have

been recognized for our efforts to help the adults we serve achieve their career goals.

This includes creating partnerships with prospective employers to identify jobs that could be done by people with developmental disabilities, as well as working to match an individual's skills, talents, abilities and interests with the right job and employer. Among our most innovative partnerships are those that involve internships. These enable people we serve to gain important skills and on-the-job experience that sometimes leads to competitive, integrated employment.

Once a person with disabilities is matched with a job, RCOC's employment service providers typically provide onsite job coaching support. A job coach's goal is to help facilitate the person's success in the workplace. Like all RCOC-funded services, the level of employment support provided depends entirely on the individual's needs. It can range from continuous, direct supervision in the workplace by a job coach to daily, weekly or monthly monitoring where the job coach checks in periodically with the person and employer to facilitate communication and resolve any workplace issues.

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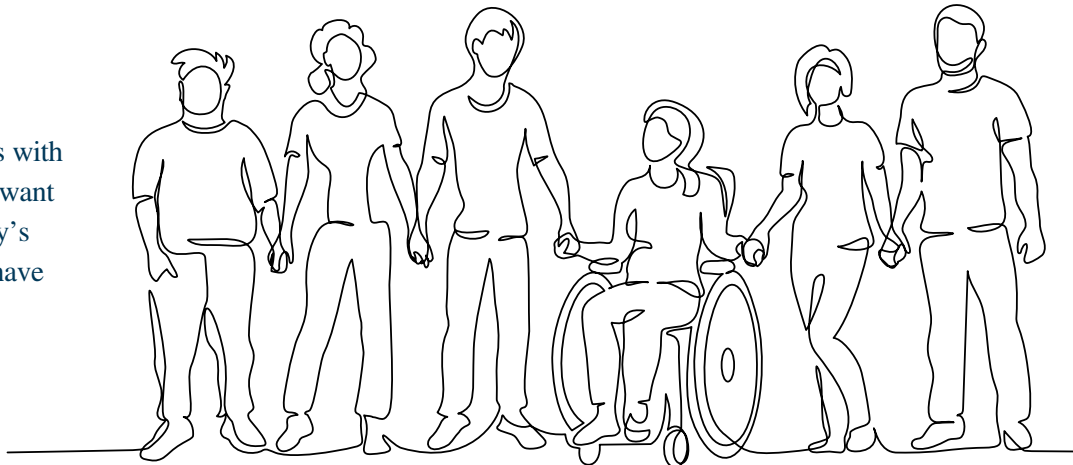
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If you'd like to learn more about employment services, be sure to contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.





## Serving Orange County's Hispanic Community

**R**egional 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 Community Outreach Coordinator Reina Hernandez at (714) 558-5406 or [rhernandez@rcocdd.com](mailto:rhernandez@rcocdd.com).

### 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, Spanish speakers with questions or concerns are invited to reach out directly to RCOC Community Outreach Coordinator Reina Hernandez at (714) 558-5406 or [rhernandez@rcocdd.com](mailto:rhernandez@rcocdd.com).

### Learn More About CalOptima

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Wednesday, June 9  
6:30-8 p.m.

To view the event flyer and information on how to register for the virtual presentation, check the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)).

### Virtual Orientation for New RCOC Parents

**I**f your family is new to RCOC, you'll want to participate in one of these special virtual orientations for Spanish-speaking parents. Learn about RCOC, the role of your RCOC Service Coordinator, and the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Program Plan (IPP) process for identifying the types of services and supports that can benefit your family. You'll also learn about other free supports available through RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center.

Early Start families:  
Wednesday, June 16, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Lanterman families:  
Thursday, July 29, 6-7:30 p.m.

For details and to register to attend, please contact Patricia Garcia at (714) 558-5400 or [pgarcia@rcocdd.com](mailto:pgarcia@rcocdd.com).

### Updated Recreation Resource Guide

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