

DIALOGUE

A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jeffrey Baek

THIS IS NOW THE SECOND YEAR THAT CALIFORNIA'S SELF-DETERMINATION PROGRAM (SDP) HAS BEEN AVAILABLE to all eligible individuals receiving services through a regional center. While only a small number of those served by Regional Center of Orange County have chosen to participate in SDP, the flexibility the program provides has enabled some like Jeffrey Baek to thrive in new and exciting ways.

A 32-year-old with autism, Jeffrey lives with his loving and supportive family in Irvine and is now in his second year with SDP. The biggest differences for him between the traditional services he received before and after SDP involve his work and transportation.

While he was previously successfully employed for six years at a Ralph's grocery store, there were other career interests he wanted to pursue in film and video. He also wanted to get into a line of work where he could make more money that would allow him to travel more with his family.

The flexibility the program provides has enabled some like Jeffrey Baek to thrive.

Shortly before transitioning to SDP, Jeffrey's mother Jinsook Baek located the ideal opportunity for him. She'd found a local Korean-owned filmmaking company and persuaded them to let Jeffrey do a paid internship, where he would work without a traditional job coach and his wages would be paid not by the company but through California's Paid Internship Program (PIP). The two-month trial worked out well and Jeffrey continued the internship for a



The Baek family (L-R): father Sungjong Baek, Jeffrey Baek, mother Jinsook Baek and sister Kira Baek.

year, giving him very good work experience. "Through my film internship, I learned how to use CGI (Computer Generated Imagery), transitions, effects, and cinematic experiences," said Jeffrey, who also greatly benefitted from learning how to better engage with his co-workers. With that internship complete, he is now looking for a new opportunity and hopes to be able to try film editing and learn more and different skills.

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This newsletter can also be read online at RCOC's website:
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Please check the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website for the most up-to-date information regarding Board meeting dates and format.

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Affordable Connectivity Program Offers Subsidy for Broadband Service

IF YOUR FAMILY QUALIFIES FOR FREE HEALTH INSURANCE

through Medi-Cal or food assistance through the CalFresh program, it's likely you are also eligible to benefit from the federal government's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

To access the program, you'll need to enroll with a participating internet service provider that offers connected devices.

The ACP is aimed at helping low-income Americans pay for the broadband Internet service and connected devices which have become increasingly necessary for school and for daily life. If you qualify, you'll receive up to \$30 a month off monthly internet service and a one-time discount up to \$100 on a laptop, tablet or desktop computer with a small copay.

To access the program, you'll need to enroll with a participating internet service provider that offers connected devices. To locate approved providers in California and to apply, visit www.affordableconnectivity.gov.

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a new program that supplements the federal government's existing Lifeline program, which has long provided low-income individuals with a monthly discount up to \$9.25 on phone and internet service. An eligible household could, for example, have Lifeline-supported mobile phone service and a separate home Internet service supported through ACP.

Why the Self Determination Program is a Great Option for Some Families

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director



SINCE JULY 1, 2021, WHEN CALIFORNIA'S SELF DETERMINATION PROGRAM (SDP) became available to most of those served by a regional center, the program has seen only a tiny percentage of eligible individuals choose it as an option.

Here in Orange County, as of mid-December, just 103 of the nearly 24,000 people with developmental disabilities we serve were in SDP. Similarly low participation rates are reflected in statewide figures and other regional centers. With inspiring successes like those of Jeffrey Baek, the subject of this issue's cover story, one might wonder why SDP has not been more popular.

As of mid-December, just 103 of the nearly 24,000 people with developmental disabilities we serve were in SDP.

One reason, almost certainly, is the program is still relatively new. While RCOC has actively shared the program, many of those we serve have long-standing, trusting relationships with RCOC and existing service providers. It's understandable they would favor continuing the traditional model of services that has successfully met their needs for decades.

It's also possible that uncertainties and stresses of the pandemic made some individuals and families less interested in making other major life changes.

We've also heard from families that the very detailed rules the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has created for SDP have been extremely challenging.

While RCOC has proactively developed tools, such as an SDP budgeting spreadsheet, to assist Orange County participants in creating and maintaining their SDP budgets, the commitment of time and effort can still be significant.

The very detailed rules the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has created for SDP have been extremely challenging.

For some, such as the Baek family, who are accustomed to managing businesses or organizations and comfortable recruiting and supervising direct care staff, the benefits of SDP – such as greater freedom and flexibility – make it all worthwhile.

At RCOC, it comes down to the fact that no two persons with disabilities and no two families are alike. That is why the IPP/IFSP (Individual Program Plan/Individual Family Service Plan) process was created decades ago. It's why we at RCOC embrace person-centered thinking and person-centered planning for each individual and family we serve.

Since all planning and service decisions are based on individual needs and preferences, we know that the number of people who choose any particular option is not necessarily a measure of its value.

No two persons with disabilities and no two families are alike.

While we would never pressure anyone to try SDP, we fully support those who do. And we're excited to see how this new option is helping many to achieve their individual potential. If you think SDP might be right for you, be sure to visit RCOC's website to learn more.

PERSON-TO-PERSON

Submit Your Spotlight Award Nominations by March 3!

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair



IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR RCOC'S ANNUAL SPOTLIGHT AWARDS! The deadline for nominations is March 3, so now is the time to put in your nominations for the people you think deserve to be honored.

It's great to recognize people for the job that they are doing because it shows you appreciate them and think they're being good role models for others. As a person served by RCOC and a Board member, I try to help out other people in the community and felt so honored when I received the Self-Advocate Spotlight Award in 2014.

You probably know someone who deserves to be recognized, so I hope you'll take the time to nominate a person served, your own ILS worker, your boss, or someone else who has made a difference in your life.

Go to the RCOC website (www.rcocdd.com) and click on Spotlight Awards under the News & Events tab. From there, you can view the award categories and criteria in English, Spanish or Vietnamese, along with complete information (also in three languages) about how to submit a nomination online, via email, or by regular mail or in person.

You probably know someone who deserves to be recognized.

You can also contact your RCOC Service Coordinator if you'd like help completing a nomination.

Thank You Wish Tree Supporters and ABC7's Spark of Love

Our Orange County community was more generous than ever in helping to brighten the holidays for low-income families served by RCOC! Nearly 800 gift wishes were fulfilled through RCOC's long-standing Wish Tree program. Supporters included: Footprints Behavioral Interventions, Helping Hands for Better Living, Cortica Care, UMass Global, Fox Dealer Interactive, Girl Scouts Oso Valley Service Unit, Edwards Lifesciences, AECOM, Giovanniello Law Group, Troutman Pepper, CASTO State President, and Progress Speech & Language Center, along with dozens of individuals, including RCOC Board members and employees. In addition, ABC7's Spark of Love program, in partnership with KWVE radio, donated 355 toys.



EVERYDAY WELLNESS:

Boost Your Immune System to Prevent Illness

WHILE ILLNESS CAN'T ALWAYS BE AVOIDED, MANY OF THE THINGS THAT CHARACTERIZE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CAN BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM, helping your body fight off exposure to everything from the common cold and the flu to other serious viruses and infections.

- **Eat a Healthy Diet.** Your body needs a wide variety of nutrients to function well. The same well-balanced, low-sugar, whole foods-based diet that can help you maintain a healthy weight can also help ensure you get key nutrients that are vital to immune function.
- **Get Plenty of Sleep.** It's during sleep that your body rests and repairs itself. So, when you don't get enough sleep, you don't just feel run-down – you're also impairing your body's ability to combat illness.
- **Get Vaccinated.** Don't forget your annual flu vaccine and other recommended vaccinations. Even if you're young and healthy, if you contract the flu you risk infecting someone else who is more vulnerable to developing a serious, even life-threatening, illness.

If you've got all of these basics covered, here are some specific food choices that can naturally enhance your body's ability to keep you healthy.

- **Eat Probiotic Foods.** Gut health – having the right balance of “good” bacteria in your digestive system – plays a big role in your overall health. While some people take probiotic supplements, you can get a lot of the same good bacteria from fermented foods like kefir, kombucha, kimchi, miso, and fresh sauerkraut.
- **Check Your Vitamin D.** Many Americans are deficient in Vitamin D, which is important for immunity and many other body processes. Egg yolks and fatty fish like sardines and salmon are good sources of Vitamin D.
- **Get Enough Vitamin C.** While it won't keep you from getting sick, Vitamin C has been shown to shorten the duration of a cold. Citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes, peppers and broccoli are all rich in Vitamin C.



ABC's of Special Education

Does Your Child Need a Functional Behavior Assessment?

FOR SOME STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS can present a barrier to learning and to the learning of others in the classroom. In these situations, the school district has a legal responsibility to provide the necessary services and supports to help with these behaviors in school.

Like other special education services and supports, behavior-related support and accommodations must be specified in the child's IEP (Individualized Education Program).

When there are behavioral concerns, an option that can be explored with your IEP team is a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). The FBA seeks to understand why a child is engaging in challenging behavior and develop an effective treatment plan that will teach the child meaningful skills as an alternative to engaging in challenging behavior.

As with other components of an IEP, it's important for parents to know the proper procedures to follow to ensure their behavior-related concerns are addressed and the child can remain in the least restrictive setting at school.

- Ensure all behavioral concerns shared by your child's school team are documented by, for example, emailing the teacher and school psychologist a summary of any conversation regarding behavioral concerns and incidents.
- You can submit a written request to your IEP team (teacher, school psychologist and principal) to complete an FBA evaluation. If

the district agrees with the request, they must send parents an assessment plan within 15 calendar days from the written request. If the district disagrees with the request, they must provide a Prior Written Notice.

If your child's challenging behaviors are hampering their education and your school district is not addressing them, don't wait until your next scheduled IEP meeting. You can also make a written request to schedule an IEP meeting to discuss your concerns. Your IEP team has 30 days from your written request to schedule an IEP meeting.

Behavior-related support and accommodations must be specified in the child's IEP.

RCOC has an Educational Services Resource Group that parents can consult regarding concerns they have about their child's education. To schedule a phone or videoconference consultation with the Resource Group leader (bilingual English and Spanish) or to get a sample letter for requesting a Functional Behavioral Assessment for your child, contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.



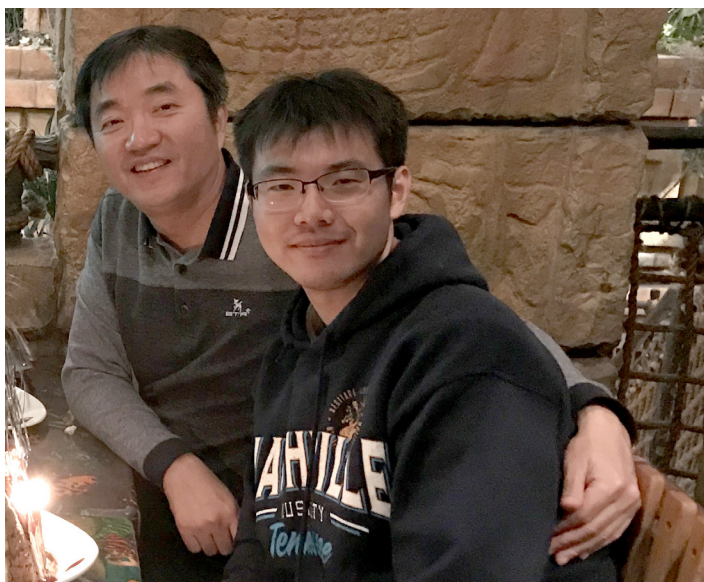
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jeffrey Baek, cont.

The transportation options Jeffrey now uses with SDP provide more freedom for him and greater flexibility for his family. Previously, Jinsook or a job coach drove Jeffrey to and from work. Under SDP, he is able to use either the Uber ride-sharing service or Irvine's TRIP transportation service for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This has improved his independence, as he has learned to schedule his own rides.

“There have been positive changes in my social skills because I feel more comfortable talking to others.”

This new skill has also enhanced Jeffrey's social life, since he no longer has to rely on his mother for transportation when he wants to participate in social activities with Best Buddies and his church fellowship group.



Jeffrey (right) with his father Sungjong Baek.

“I have gained more confidence than before,” he said, noting that both his English language skills and social skills have improved. “There have been positive changes in my social skills because I feel more comfortable talking to others.”



Jeffrey at work at his film company internship.

His RCOC Service Coordinator Tina Blabagno is very impressed with Jeffrey's success in SDP and believes that his mother's dedication to his well-being and independence has been a key factor in his success.

“Jinsook is an amazing advocate for Jeffrey,” said Tina, noting that Jinsook even undertook Independent Facilitator training so she could master the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) complex and evolving rules surrounding SDP. She's also founded a nonprofit organization called Being Built Together, which began as a Korean parent support group and now provides support statewide to Korean-speaking families impacted by intellectual and developmental disabilities.

While Jinsook acknowledged that finding the right service providers for Jeffrey was a challenge, all of the planning and effort that's gone into SDP has been worth it for their family.

“SDP is not just a new program,” she said. “It is a meaningful process to see my son's potential and discover his hopes and dreams that I hadn't thought could come true.”



REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY

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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

Irvine Barclay Theatre Hosts Holiday Event for RCOC Families

Hundreds of individuals and families served by RCOC were treated to a very special, sensory-friendly holiday performance at Irvine Barclay Theatre on December 9. The fun and festive event featured an abridged performance of The Nutcracker ballet, along with holiday carols sung by the University High School choir. Newport Beach's David Shaoulain, 12, is pictured here with several of the performers.



Photo courtesy of Doug Gifford

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 Comfort Connection Family Resource Center Parent Service Coordinator Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

Virtual Coffee Talk

Join other Spanish-speaking parents for this informal conversation via Zoom, on the topic of Positive Parenting for Children with a Disability. For more information and to RSVP, contact Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.



Tuesday, March 28
6-7:30 p.m.

Families and Communities Together Family Resource Center

Families and Communities Together (FaCT) Family Resource Center (FRC) is a network of 16 local FRCs that are family-friendly, community-based sites providing access to comprehensive prevention and treatment-oriented services for all families, including birth, blended, kinship, adoptive and foster families.

Offered by multicultural and multilingual staff that reflect the surrounding neighborhoods and families they serve, services include: Counseling, Parenting Education, Domestic Violence Personal Empowerment Program, Family Support Services, Information & Referral Services, Case Management Team Services, and Emergency Assistance. Food and diaper distribution might also be available. For a complete list of locations, visit www.factoc.org/locations.

All FaCT Family Resource Center locations have bilingual, English/Spanish staff to help at all their locations.

Transition...Moving on at 3 Workshop

This transition workshop takes place virtually and aims to educate and support parents before, during and after their child's third birthday. Topics include assessment and eligibility determination for school district services, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, and ongoing eligibility for Regional Center services. Spanish interpretation is provided along with a PowerPoint in Spanish. Register online via the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com). For more information and for help with online registration, contact Patricia Garcia at 714.558.5400 or pgarcia@rcocdd.com.

Wednesday, April 26
6:30-8:30 p.m.

What Does Your Service Coordinator Do?



THE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS RCOC PROVIDES ARE BASED ENTIRELY ON THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF THE PERSON WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. To help put needed services and supports in place, each individual or family is assigned a Service Coordinator. The Service Coordinator's job is to help the individual and family identify their hopes and dreams for a full and productive life, and then work together to access appropriate services and supports through generic resources and through RCOC's network of providers. The Service Coordinator also offers valuable guidance about other government-funded programs and community resources that might benefit a family.

The vast majority of RCOC's 459 employees are Service Coordinators, and each holds either a Bachelor's degree or a Master's degree in a field such as child development, counseling, psychology, social work, or sociology and must have at least a year of case management experience before being hired. Every Service Coordinator also goes through extensive training to ensure they are knowledgeable about the person-centered planning process used to develop each person's Individual Program Plan (IPP) and – for families with children in Early Start – each family's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

The Service Coordinator is the family's primary point of contact with RCOC.

Since the Service Coordinator is the family's primary point of contact with RCOC and plays a key role in supporting so many aspects of a person's life, good communication is essential.

It's important for Service Coordinators to be sensitive to each family's cultural preferences

and values, and individuals and family members need to be candid when talking about their needs, preferences and experiences. Currently, 75 percent of RCOC Service Coordinators are fluent in at least two languages, which can be extremely helpful for families more comfortable communicating about complex, personal situations in a language other than English.

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It's also important for individuals and families to know they can contact their RCOC Service Coordinator any time they have a question or concern. There's no need to wait until a formal IPP/IFSP meeting. And if, for any reason, you feel your Service Coordinator is not as responsive as you would like or you are uncomfortable speaking with that person, you can always contact the Supervisor and ask to be reassigned. We want to ensure you have a positive relationship with your Service Coordinator.

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 Yen Truong at 714.558.5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Moving on at 3...Transition Workshops for Parents

This free transition workshop helps parents understand the differences between Early Start and school-based services, learn about the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process schools use to determine what services a child receives, and much more. This session takes place virtually via Zoom and is offered in English with Vietnamese interpretation. For more information and to register, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at 714.558.5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Wednesday, April 26

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Free Online Tutoring

A new program launched by the State of California offers K-12 students at eligible schools access to free online tutoring 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with tutors familiar with California's K-12 curriculum and standards. Tutoring is offered for Math, Language Arts, and other core K-12 subjects in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog. Adult learners can also access writing assistance, citizenship resources and other tools. Go to www.brainfuse.com to learn more.



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Families and Communities Together (FaCT) Family Resource Center (FRC) is a network of 16 local FRCs that are family-friendly, community-based sites providing access to comprehensive prevention and treatment-oriented services for all families, including birth, blended, kinship, adoptive and foster families. Offered by multicultural and multilingual staff that reflect the surrounding neighborhoods and families they serve, services include: Counseling, Parenting Education, Domestic Violence Personal Empowerment Program, Family Support Services, Information & Referral Services, Case Management Team Services, and Emergency Assistance. Food and diaper distribution might also be available. For a complete list of locations, visit www.factoc.org/locations. Contact information for the Westminster and Garden Grove locations is as follows:

Westminster Family Resource Center

200 Plaza Street Westminster, CA 92683
Phone: 714.903.1331

Magnolia Park Family Resource Center

11402 Magnolia Street
Garden Grove, CA 92841
Phone: 714.530.7413

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