

# **What is OCRA?**

Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy  
December 2020

## **Introduction of Presenter**

**CRA - Tania Schloss**  
**Assistant CRA - Maria Salas**

**Office Phone: 619-239-7877**

## Disclaimer

Because this is a group training, please do not share any private or confidential information. There is no right of confidentiality for anything that is asked or discussed during this training. We are mandated reporters and obligated to report abuse and neglect of disabled adults. This training is not a private consultation for legal advice and no attorney/client relationship is formed between you and the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy. If you have an individual or private question you want to ask us, please call our office for an intake appointment or give us your name and number before you leave the training today and someone will call you back.

## Introduction to OCRA

The Office of Clients Rights' Advocacy (OCRA) is a program of Disability Rights California.

OCRA is funded through a contract with the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

## Who OCRA Serves

OCRA advocates on behalf of consumers with developmental disabilities of the 21 regional centers across the state\*

This includes:

- 1) People currently receiving regional center services
- 2) People seeking eligibility to receive regional center services.

\* <https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/listings/>

## What is a Clients' Rights Advocate (CRA)?

- The CRA is a person trained to advocate on behalf of people with developmental disabilities.
- There is one CRA for clients of every regional center, as well as statewide CRAs.
- CRAs are not employees of the regional center. CRAs are employees of Disability Rights California.
- CRAs provide free legal services for regional center consumers.
- CRAs try to resolve legal problems related to a consumer's disability.

## What is an Assistant Clients' Rights Advocate (ACRA)?

- An ACRA is a person who helps manage the office and the cases for the CRA.
- ACRA's answer the phone, return calls, and complete intakes.
- ACRA's can help clients directly and give trainings.
- Each OCRA office has one CRA and one ACRA.
- There are also statewide ACRA's who are often bilingual in English and Spanish.

## What can OCRA do for me?

- Provide information to you on your legal rights.
- Review documents and advise you on how to resolve your case.
- Help you prepare for an upcoming meeting or hearing.
- Assist in preparing documents to assure compliance with the law.
- Provide legal trainings for consumers, families, service providers, and community groups.
- Represent you at a meeting or an administrative hearing.
- Investigate denials of rights.

## What areas of law can OCRA assist me with?

Our brochure lists some common legal areas we handle:

- Regional Center/Lanterman Act
- Special Education
- Social Security
- Medi-Cal and Private Insurance
- Discrimination
- Conservatorship and Guardianship
- Personal Autonomy
- Community Integration
- IHSS
- Abuse and Neglect

## OCRA Provides **FREE** Legal Services to Regional Center Consumers

Our advocates help clients with legal issues, including:

- Representation at a SSI or SSDI hearing
- SSI or SSDI overpayments
- Disability cessations
- Age-18 redeterminations
- Work incentives while on SSI
- Information on applying for SSI or SSDI
- Appealing a denial from SSI or SSDI

## Legal Issues, cont'd

- Information on applying for IHSS
- Appealing IHSS denials
- IHSS protective supervision
- Medi-Cal eligibility and terminations
- Medi-Cal share-of-cost
- Medi-Cal waivers
- CalABLE accounts
- Alternatives to conservatorship
- Reasonable accommodations at work or in housing

## How do I get OCRA to help me with my problem?

Call the OCRA office assigned to help consumers from your regional center. OCRA staff will ask you:

- 1) Basic questions such as your phone number, address, and birthday.
- 2) About your problem.
- 3) Questions to see how we can help you.

Does OCRA help every regional center consumer who calls?

OCRA tries to help everyone who calls the office. However, the type of help will vary.

You may receive:

- 1) Information and/or referral
- 2) Technical assistance
- 3) Investigation of your case
- 4) Direct Representation

How does OCRA decide to directly represent me in my case?

- Direct Representation means the CRA will take your case.
- You will know you are directly represented because you have to sign a paper called a Representation Agreement.

In deciding whether to represent you directly, the CRA will consider, among other things:

- The merits of your case
- Your ability to advocate for yourself
- The availability of OCRA resources
- Other advocacy sources available to you
- Each CRA decides based upon the above, whether they can help you beyond the initial call.

Is every caller considered a client?

NO.

Through its contract with DDS, OCRA serves ONLY consumers of the regional centers, NOT their family members, service providers, or other advocates.

Therefore, the consumer is the client. Not the parent, family member, service provider, or other advocate.



## OCRA works to support the expressed or best interest of the consumer

- The expressed interests of the client are what a consumer tells us they want.
- If the client is unable to communicate their desires, then OCRA will work to determine the best interests of the client and how they can be met.

## Best Interests

OCRA will ask:

- Family
- Circle of Support
- Care Providers
- Regional Center Service Coordinator
- Other people important in a consumer's life

## Confidentiality

- Since the regional center consumer is OCRA's client, only the client is entitled to receive information about his or her case.
- OCRA may share information about a client's case after we get their permission on the phone or in person, even if we don't have it in writing
- Usually OCRA needs written permission, but in an extreme emergency, you may tell OCRA.
- This means that OCRA cannot share information with family members, service providers, health providers, or other advocates without first receiving consent from the client.

## Conflicts of Interest

If a conflict arises between the expressed or best interests of the client and the wishes of the family, service provider, or advocate, OCRA will always work for the expressed or best interests of the client, not the person who first called an OCRA office.

## What if I have a problem that OCRA cannot handle?

If you have a legal problem that OCRA cannot handle, OCRA will usually:

- Refer you to another advocacy agency
- Send you self-help publications
- Refer you to the Disability Rights California Web site: [www.disabilityrightsca.org](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org), and
- Refer you to the Family Resource Center

## How do I contact my local OCRA office?

- If you know the name and phone number of your local OCRA office, contact that office directly.
- If you do not know the name of the staff in your local OCRA office, call toll-free:
  - Northern CA (800) 390-7032
  - Southern CA (866) 833-6712
  - TTY (800) 669-6023
- Online staff directory: <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/ocra>

## Next Steps:

Complete the Survey

Questions and Answers