

# DIALOGUE

A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

VOLUME 38 NO. 3 • SUMMER 2024



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Catherine Mak and Maverick Im

**SINCE THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE AMENDED THE LANTERMAN ACT TO ALLOW REGIONAL CENTERS ACROSS THE STATE TO FUND SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS** for those we serve, thousands of children and adults with developmental disabilities are experiencing a multitude of benefits from participation in these programs. Here are just two wonderful examples.

#### Catherine Mak

A five-year-old with cerebral palsy, Catherine has been taking swimming lessons at Waterworks Aquatics Irvine since October 2023 and karate lessons at Tustin's Karate for All since November.

Initially, her parents were interested in these programs to help address Catherine's sensory challenges, make her safe around water, and improve her strength and balance, as she tends to be weaker on one side. Her mother, Alyssa, noted the classes have definitely helped in all these areas, and yielded some unexpected benefits as well.

***She is sleeping better and is not distracted as easily.***

For example, Catherine is a strong-willed child and had always been a very picky eater, so it was often difficult for Alyssa to get her to try new and healthy foods. Now that she's taking part in regular exercise that spurs her appetite while building her physical fitness, Catherine has been a lot more open to trying new foods. Her mom also said she is sleeping better and is not distracted as easily, as she's had to focus to learn her karate sequences.



Catherine has experienced many benefits from swimming lessons and other social recreation programs.

**Cont. on Page 7**

## DIALOGUE

This newsletter can also be read online at RCOC's website:

[www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com).



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## BUDGET UPDATE

# Service Provider Rate Increase Delayed Until January 1, 2025

**GOVERNOR NEWSOM AND CALIFORNIA'S LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP REACHED A BUDGET DEAL** that ensures the service provider rates increases that were expected to take effect July 1, 2024 will instead go into effect on January 1, 2025.

This delay is very disappointing since, as RCOC and others have shared, this rate increase is a critical need. It is the largest portion of a range of adjustments originally recommended as baselines in the 2019 Department of Developmental Services Rate Study. Nonetheless, we appreciate our elected leaders in the Legislature who responded to the collective advocacy of Regional Centers and advocates statewide by opposing the governor's plan to delay the rate increases even later.

Importantly, this deal prevents another delay being proposed in the governor's budget for fiscal 2025-2026 which is shared in January 2025.

***The service provider rates increases that were expected to take effect July 1, 2024 will instead go into effect on January 1, 2025.***

### Trailer Bills Also Contain Changes

In connection with the budget deal, the Legislature also produces "trailer bills" (called this, because they "trail" the budget bill) which provide additional instructions for how the budget deal will be implemented.

In addition to details of the service provider rate increase noted above, this year's developmental services trailer bill contains several important new provisions. Among the most directly impactful to families is the elimination of the Family Cost Participation fee and Annual Family Program fee.

These fees, originally adopted several years ago in response to earlier budget crises, have proven burdensome for many families. Due to the significant administrative costs associated with them, these fees also have not produced the expected cost savings.

For complete details for the enacted budget for fiscal 2024-2025, go to the Department of Finance's budget website at [www.ebudget.ca.gov](http://www.ebudget.ca.gov) or the DDS website at [www.dds.ca.gov/transparency/budget-information](http://www.dds.ca.gov/transparency/budget-information).

# RCOC Expands Social-Recreation Options for Individuals and Families

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director



**SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE LIVES OF ALL CHILDREN AND ADULTS**, so it was great news when the State of California determined that these types of programs

can be funded by Regional Centers. However, making this new service easily accessible to those we serve has had its challenges, as the programs must also comply with the federal government's HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services) Final Rule. (See page 7 for a QR code link to a video series explaining the Final Rule.)

*We've identified hundreds of Orange County options families can explore.*

I'm proud of our team's progress over the past two years, as we've identified hundreds of Orange County options families can explore. Ranging from music, arts and dance, to swimming and other sports, cooking and more, there's something for every individual's interests and needs.

### Benefits of Social Recreation Programs

RCOC's service authorizations have grown concurrently, as our Service Coordinators have encouraged individuals and families to explore these important and life-enriching services. As described in this issue's cover story, enhanced socialization and physical wellness are just the start. Many are also experiencing other unexpected benefits, such as improved sleep, better focus, and increased flexibility with everything from food choices to schedules.

### Improved Payment Options

Previously, since most social-recreation programs are not formally "vendored" as RCOC service providers, most families had to prepay for their family members' programs and seek reimbursement from RCOC. While this worked for some, it was a major financial and time burden for many of the lower-income families we serve.

*There's something for every individual's interests and needs.*

This summer we were pleased to roll out a new payment model that enables compliant social recreation programs to be paid in a way similar to other RCOC service providers. By eliminating the need for families to pay in advance, the new payment model eliminates what had been a major barrier to access for many.

### Explore Social Recreation Options

If you haven't already discussed social-recreation services with your RCOC Service Coordinator, feel free to reach out any time. We're always here to help. We also continue to add more choices to the 116-page list of fully-inclusive programs that meet HCBS requirements. To access the list directly, use this QR code.



## PERSON-TO-PERSON

# You Don't Have to Stay at Home!

By Yvonne Kluttz, PAC Chair and Amy Jessee, PAC Co-Chair



**A LOT OF TIMES, WHEN PEOPLE THINK ABOUT SOCIAL-RECREATION, THEY AUTOMATICALLY THINK OF CHILDREN AND SUMMER BREAK.** But we want you to know there are lots of activities out there for adults with developmental disabilities too, and they can offer great opportunities to make friends with others with and without disabilities.

Yvonne remembers a time when there wasn't much available for her and her peers, but she and her Sunday school church group loved visiting and riding horses at San Jacinto's Calicinto Ranch, which is still operating today. She and Amy both also have enjoyed participating in bowling leagues - Yvonne at Anaheim's Linbrook Bowl and Amy at Fountain Valley Bowl, where she and her teammates called themselves the "Ramp Rascals" because they all used wheelchairs.



Amy also played wheelchair tennis from her teens to late 20s and is excited to again participate in R.A.D. (Rising Above Disabilities) Camp, which offers summer programs for youth and adults with developmental disabilities.

Whatever your interests, we hope you'll pursue them this summer and know you don't have to stay at home all the time. We have both developed many close friendships with people we met participating in social and recreation programs, and you can too!

## Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

This workshop is free for parents, and offered via Zoom. It covers basic principles of positive behavior management, with a practical focus on helping parents 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 the series. Toilet training is the focus of the last session. Advance registration is required. Contact your Service Coordinator for additional information, and to register.



**Presented in Spanish by Advanced Behavioral**

**When:** Thursday evenings - September 26, October 3, October 10, October 17 and October 24

**Time:** 5:30-8:00 p.m.



## EVERYDAY WELLNESS: Tips for Healthy Teeth and Gums

**MAINTAINING GOOD DENTAL HEALTH ISN'T JUST A GOOD WAY TO HELP PREVENT CAVITIES AND BAD BREATH.** Plenty of studies link good dental and oral health with better health outcomes in a multitude of areas. These basics tips may be all most people need to maintain good dental health throughout life.

- Brush after eating or drinking, at least twice a day for at least two minutes. Be sure to brush all of the tooth surfaces, including the back and sides of teeth. It's also a good idea to finish by brushing your tongue, which can harbor harmful bacteria.
- Don't forget to floss, which cleans between your teeth, at least once a day.

***Plenty of studies link good dental and oral health with better health outcomes.***

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet with limited sugar, and drink plenty of water.
- Don't smoke. Smoking increases your risk for all types of oral cancers as well as periodontal (gum) disease.
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, or when it wears out.
- Visit the dentist twice a year for regular check-ups and professional teeth cleaning.

Many of those RCOC serves have sensory issues or other disabilities that make it difficult to

perform dental care without assistance. Having one's teeth cleaned by someone else can be difficult for some to tolerate. Here are some ways to make the process more comfortable.

- Use a non-foaming, unflavored toothpaste. Unflavored varieties tend to encourage a person to spit, rather than swallow, the toothpaste.
- Be sure you don't use too much toothpaste. A pea-size amount should be enough.
- Using a soft-bristled brush, make small and gentle circular motions away from the gumline.
- Explore floss-holders or inter-dental brushes, if traditional flossing isn't feasible.

If regular brushing and flossing are not possible, ask your dentist about oral rinses and other alternatives. Your RCOC Service Coordinator can also help, so reach out if you're having difficulty finding a local dentist with expertise in treating individuals with special needs.



# ABC's of Special Education

## Transitioning from Special Education Preschool to Kindergarten

**IN THIS ISSUE, WE CONTINUE OUR SERIES ON TRANSITIONS FOR CHILDREN IN SPECIAL EDUCATION** - this time, sharing some key points about the transition from special education preschool to kindergarten.

### **Key Differences Between Preschool and Kindergarten**

For some, the larger setting of an elementary school where kindergarten takes place and longer school hours can be challenging. The presence of older children may also require some adjustment. However, by working together with the school team, the transition can be a wonderful experience for both children with special needs and their caregivers.

### **Preparing Your Child for the New Environment**

Ask your current IEP team for individualized home-based activities you can use to help your child develop kindergarten skills.

Read stories about kindergarten to help your child better understand what to expect.

If possible, visit the school and allow your child time to explore the school playground ahead of the first day of kindergarten. Ask the principal if you and your child can visit the classroom before school starts.

It's also a good idea to review and begin practicing what will be your new morning routine for having breakfast, getting dressed and getting to school. This is especially important for parents integrating school into your own pre-work routine. If you feel stressed, your child's anxiety will escalate in response.

### **Help from RCOC**

As with all transitions, the preschool to kindergarten transition IEP meeting is critical for ensuring appropriate kindergarten goals, services and supports for your child. Be sure to review the special education column in the Winter 2024 issue of Dialogue, posted on our website, which is all about transition IEP meetings.

And remember you can always ask for help from your RCOC Service Coordinator, who can answer questions and will be happy to attend the IEP transition meeting with you to lend support and offer insights into the process.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Catherine Mak and Maverick Im, cont.

#### Maverick Im

Ten-year-old Maverick, who has autism, started classes this past February at Fountain Valley's Williams MMA. A very bright boy, who likes schedules and excels at math and numbers, Maverick has struggled with flexibility and focus since he is easily bored by things that don't interest him.

His mom, Stephanie, is delighted at how her son now looks forward to the group martial arts class which involves both individual moves that enhance his fitness and coordination, as well as one-on-one sparring where the kids suit-up in protective gear to practice their new skills.

Stephanie often observes and sometimes records Maverick during class. By replaying the recordings after class, she's able to help him recognize when he's "spacing out" and see the importance of focusing and listening carefully to the coach's instructions.

Maverick's RCOC Service Coordinator, Eva Rodriguez, who has supported the family since his first IPP in 2016, is also thrilled at the progress she's seen, as an effective combination of therapies enabled him to fully transition two years ago from special education into a general education classroom.



Maverick looks forward to his classes at Williams MMA.



Maverick (front left) with his father William (top) and (center, L-R) mom Stephanie, sister Isabella and sister Rebecca.

"At first it was just a routine for him, but he's made friends and he's really into it now," she said, noting that she particularly appreciates that Maverick is treated like any other kid in the fully-inclusive program.

### Check Out Our New YouTube Videos

Because nearly all Regional Center services and supports receive federal funding, they must comply with the federal government's HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services) Final Rule. RCOC partnered with Tri-Counties Regional Center and others to produce a 10-part series of fun, animated short films explaining various aspects of the rule. Click on the QR code or go to <https://www.youtube.com/@tri-countiesregionalcenter/playlists> to view the video series in multiple languages.





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

## RCOC List of Services Offered

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHETHER A NEED YOUR FAMILY HAS COULD BE PAID FOR WITH RCOC FUNDS?** While all services and supports are individualized, we have tried to make it easier for individuals and families to understand what’s available by putting together lists of services that are commonly recommended for those in Early Start (birth to 2), school-age individuals (3 to 21), and adults (22+).



Click on the QR code or go to [www.rcocdd.com/client-services/services-provided](http://www.rcocdd.com/client-services/services-provided) and scroll down to view and download the lists of services in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean.





# Serving Orange County's Hispanic Community

**REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY** has prepared this insert especially for the individuals and families we serve who are most comfortable communicating in Spanish. These events, programs and activities are presented in Spanish and/or are geared specifically for those in Southern California's Hispanic community. However, some are not funded or endorsed by RCOC and this information is provided as a courtesy. If you know of other opportunities you would like to share with other Spanish speakers, please contact RCOC's Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

## Moving On at 3...Transition Workshop

These transition workshops take place virtually and aim 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. Presented in English, Spanish translation may be provided when requested in advance. Register online via the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website ([www.rcocdd.com](http://www.rcocdd.com)). For information and for help with online registration, contact Patricia Garcia at 714.558.5400 or [pgarcia@rcocdd.com](mailto:pgarcia@rcocdd.com).

**Thursday, September 26**  
6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, December 10**  
6:30-8:30 p.m.

## Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CAND)

CAND is hosting Disability Rights CA to speak on various topics in the coming months. Meetings take place on Thursdays, in Spanish via Zoom from 5-6:30 p.m. To register, go to [www.thecenter4autism.org](http://www.thecenter4autism.org) and click on Classes and Workshops under the Education & Training tab. For more information, call 949.267.0200 or email [centertraining1@uci.edu](mailto:centertraining1@uci.edu).

**September 5**  
Supportive Decision Making in Health Care

**October 3**  
Medi-Cal and SSI after the age of 18

**November 7**  
CalABLE Accounts

## Neurodivergent Family Nights



Pretend City welcomes families with children of all

ages from the neurodiverse community and other disabilities. Neurodivergent Family Nights take place twice a month from 5-7 p.m. and provide a chance for families to enjoy an environment designed to be sensory-friendly.

**Tuesdays**  
August 13, September 10, October 8 and November 12

**Thursdays**  
August 22, September 26, October 24 and November 21

# 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.

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. Our experience shows that with the right supports in place, almost everyone we serve can have a successful employment experience.

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.

***With the right supports in place, almost everyone we serve can have a successful employment experience.***

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.

If you'd like to learn more about employment services, be sure to contact your RCOC 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's Kaitlynn Yen Truong at 714.558.5405 or [ktruong@rcocdd.com](mailto:ktruong@rcocdd.com).

## Fall Festival

The City of Westminster's annual Fall Festival features live entertainment, delicious food, craft vendors, a resource fair, fun children's activities, and more. For more information, call 714.895.2860 or email [csronline@westminster-ca.gov](mailto:csronline@westminster-ca.gov).

**Thursday, September 26 to  
Sunday, September 29, 2024**

Westminster Civic Center  
8200 Westminster Blvd in Westminster

## Halloween Festival

Come out for a night of spooky fun at Westminster's Halloween Spooktacular, which features a variety of ghoulish activities, games, food, fun, and more. The evening kicks off with an exciting Trunk or Treat event and closes with a movie. For more information, call 714.895.2860 or email [csronline@westminster-ca.gov](mailto:csronline@westminster-ca.gov).



**Friday, October 25**

Westminster Civic Center  
8200 Westminster Blvd in Westminster

## Mid-Autumn Festival

The third annual Santa Ana Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival, is a free, family-friendly event that highlights Asian cultures and Vietnamese members of the community. Traditionally this festival is a celebration of the fall harvest and full moon, a time when families get together to enjoy each other's company and the bountiful harvests after a year of labor and care.

**Saturday, October 5**  
4-8 p.m.

Centennial Park, 3000 W. Edinger Avenue in Santa Ana



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### **626 Night Market**

Inspired by traditional Asian night markets, 626 Night Market draws thousands of visitors who enjoy an array of food and drink options and handmade goods from more than 200 vendors. There are also games, crafts and live entertainment. Presale admission is \$5, or \$6 on event days. Children 3 and under are free. Parking is \$12 and must be paid with a card.

**Friday, September 6 to Sunday, September 8**

4-11 p.m.

OC Fair & Event Center

88 Fair Drive in Costa Mesa



### **Buena Park Culture Fest**

Buena Park Culture Fest brings together the Buena Park community to explore and celebrate different cultures around the world through amazing performances, delicious food, community booths and a variety of family-friendly activities. For more information, call 714.562.3860 or email [finearts@buenapark.com](mailto:finearts@buenapark.com).

**Saturday, September 21**

5-9 p.m.

Buena Park Civic Center  
6650 Beach Boulevard  
Buena Park

### **Mid-Autumn Festival**

In partnership with South Coast Chinese Cultural Center, the City of Irvine will host the fourth annual Mid-Autumn Festival. This family-friendly event includes education, entertainment, crafts, food trucks, and cultural demonstrations. Local community partners will also attend and share information and resources. For information, call 949.724.6600 or email [yourirvine@cityofirvine.org](mailto:yourirvine@cityofirvine.org).

**Friday, September 13**

Great Park  
8000 Great Park Blvd.  
Irvine

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