

# ALTA CONNECTIONS

The Quarterly Client, Service Provider, and Staff Update Newsletter



*Learn more about our featured artist on page 15*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*Executive Director Lori Banales*

The holidays are for celebrating, and at ACRC we have so much to commemorate over the past quarter. We celebrate our workplace and staff, our community, and the events we were able to host in our new office space and community locations. As our staff census grows, we are proud to welcome new team members, placing our staff total at nearly 900. We have recently added two case management growth units; one for children's (age 6-17) in our Sacramento office and another one for adults (age 18- and beyond), in our Sacramento office. As we roll into the latter half of the fiscal year, our agency is committed to continue to address caseload ratios, implementing our strategic hiring plan to balance the needs of the organization against the operational funding provided. ACRC celebrates the wonderful dedication and positive impact of our teams. There have been several initiatives and technology advancements that have rolled out over the past year that have required a commitment of time and energy to master. Their spirit and willingness to embrace these changes has been amazing, including the amount of peer-to-peer support that happens incidentally around the agency.

### WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

ACRC is hosting our next quarterly virtual community Meetings February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026- 11am-12pm

Please note: ACRC quarterly community meeting is intended to share updates across the organization and to engage with our community. This is not a space for client specific issues. Those discussions are welcomed at the Planning Team level or in a one-on-one conversation. Thank you for understanding the need to preserve client confidentiality. For additional information visit <https://www.altaregional.org/calendar> to get the link. No registration required.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE - CONT.

In September, we hosted our first annual emergency resource fair in our new office. There are several photos that showcase the vendors who participated. It was well attended and the feedback was very positive. This will be an annual event. A special note of thanks and recognition goes to our Emergency Coordinator, Hubert Enriquez for bringing this idea to life! In addition to the emergency resource fair, ACRC also hosted another successful and well-attended, Micro-Enterprise fair at our main office. Present were nearly 30 client businesses who came ready to promote their goods and services to a crowd of shoppers who were ready to support them. ACRC will continue to create opportunities for those in our community to have a place to shine! While our new headquarters has capacity to host large events, it does not have the space to comfortably accommodate the crowds that are drawn annually to our Santa Day celebration. This year we hosted at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in Sacramento. The space was made for this event! Attendees had ample room to navigate around the booths which shared holiday traditions from around the world as well as community partner resources. It was a beautiful day that was well attended by smiling clients, family members, and vendors across our catchment. Thank you to all the ACRC staff and community partners that made this day possible. It is truly a magical day.

As we look forward to 2026, ACRC will be closely watching the California budget process as the Governor releases the proposed state budget on January 10<sup>th</sup>. ACRC will work with the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA: our trade association), alongside of multiple community affiliates to unite under a strongly aligned and purposeful message to support the developmental disability system. Banding together under a cohesive message provides the strength and impact needed to ensure that our system remains whole. ACRC serves over 35,000 clients who are depending on us to promote their needs and to share how quality, community integrated services support the promises made through the Lanterman Act. Over the next few months, there will be many opportunities for our community to lift their voices to share their stories. We will be calling on you to join in the advocacy efforts. There is no more meaningful and effective campaign than that led by the people we support.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

The Department of Developmental Services maintains an events calendar. Visit their calendar today to participate in upcoming stakeholder opportunities.

<https://www.dds.ca.gov/dds-events/>





# ACRC COMMUNITY OUTREACH UPDATES



*Edgewater Elementary  
School, Marysville  
Alta California Regional Center*



*Chinese Culture  
Foundation Eastern and  
Western Health Fair,  
Elk Grove*



*4<sup>th</sup> Annual American  
Indian Symposium  
on Intellectual and  
Developmental  
Disabilities*



*Advocate Sacramento  
World Mental Health Day,  
Roseville*



*Advocate Sacramento  
World Mental Health Day,  
Roseville*



*Transgender Day of  
Remembrance Sacramento  
PFLAG and Rainbow  
Commerce*



*My Sister's House Run for a Safe Haven*



*My Sister's House Run for a Safe Haven*



# PEOPLE PLANNING TOGETHER TRAINING (PPT) CURRICULUM

We believe in the power of person-centered thinking. Through the PPT curriculum, ACRC PPT certified Client Advocates deliver innovative, client-focused instruction that promotes self-advocacy. PPT is a movement toward self-advocacy, independence, and community connection.

Originally designed for adults, PPT has been adapted to meet the needs of high school transition-age students. Partnering with school districts, ACRC offers the PPT Youth Skill Building Workshop, giving students the chance to explore self-discovery, goal setting, and healthy support systems for school and employment.

Since 2024, ACRC has delivered PPT to 83 students through Sacramento City Unified School District's Career Technical Education Program.

For adult clients, PPT provides a safe and supportive environment to learn self-advocacy skills and plan for the future.

In Spring 2025, ACRC partnered with two vendored day programs, reaching 18 adults.

ACRC is committed to expanding the reach of PPT and strengthening community partnerships. In the coming year, we plan to deliver PPT to more students and to engage more day program providers. Accessibility and innovation remain at the heart of our mission as we empower clients of all ages to discover their voices and shape their futures.



## HONORING STAFF WITH WORK ANNIVERSARIES



During our September 25, 2026 Board of Directors meeting, we had an opportunity to acknowledge our ACRC staff celebrating their work anniversaries. Congratulations to our many long-time staff who were honored.



## OCTOBER 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH SEAN ELLIOT

This recognition speaks to the dedication that Sean has to the clients on his caseload, their families and support systems, the residential service providers for the homes he oversees, the community partners he interacts with, and the ACRC staff members that he works with.



Sean has been an SC at ACRC since May of 2022 in the residential unit. He is resilient when faced with constant challenges, changes, and unexpected events in the residential unit, which many have difficulty with. Sean is honest and has integrity. He is a great advocate for the clients and providers that he works with. Sean is also patient with the clients and their support network(s), which builds strong and trusting relationships. Sean is adaptable, reliable, punctual, and professional.

When you get to know Sean, you will find that he is a genuine person who listens to what you say. Sean is a very caring, respectful, and giving individual, who constantly thinks of others.

His compassion and empathy make him a great teammate and someone that others look up to, like to collaborate with, and enjoy being around. Congratulations Sean!

## NOVEMBER 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH WENDI MCCRAY

There are not enough words to describe the inspiring passion and dedication our Lead Service Coordinator, Wendi McCray, brings to her work in service to our clients and our agency. In Wendi's over 22-year tenure with ACRC, she has served clients and families in several capacities including Intake, Service Coordination in both the South Lake Tahoe and Placerville offices, and now in her present role as the Lead Service Coordinator for the Placerville office that supports El Dorado County!

Wendi goes above and beyond for her clients, advocating at committees, establishing and building community relationships with local partners, producing detailed documentation, and bringing a sound and knowledgeable perspective to individualized services and supports recommendations. If you have had the opportunity to meet and/or work with Wendi, such as in the Conservatorship Committee in her role as a rotating Service Coordinator, staffing a client's case in the Specialized/Forensic Units, attending court with her client, or shadowing her at an IPP meeting to support with onboarding a new Service Coordinator, you have likely witnessed a shining example of what our agency represents at its very best in the expertise and compassion that Wendi exemplifies. Wendi has been and remains a staple and the heart of ACRC's Placerville Office. Beyond her exceptional service coordination to clients and families, Wendi goes the extra mile as the Lead SC to support her Placerville and South Lake Tahoe Service Coordinators and Managers in countless ways. She takes the time to make connections with each team member and helps foster a culture of togetherness in the office. Additionally, Wendi keeps a "pulse" on the team's morale and the needs of the office, provides practical tools, feedback, and ideas, and recognizes the "wins" and strengths of her team members whenever possible.



You can often find Wendi sitting side-by-side with an SC on our team to offer one-on-one coaching and training support to meet them where they are which elevates the team. Overall, Wendi takes the time to get to know the people she supports outside of their professional role to bring them into the Placerville “family” and tether them to something bigger than themselves – the mission of our agency and strength of the collective support of our team! Wendi is an invaluable social service professional and team member to our Placerville team, clients/families we support, and the agency. She is and has been a fierce advocate for people with disabilities throughout her life, going back to her childhood attending school with children with different abilities.

Aside from her incredible knowledge and expertise in social work and agency procedures, Wendi possesses the tact and adaptability to step in and support wherever needed with both positivity and resourcefulness to help create positive outcomes. Wendi lives our agency vision in not only her ACRC role, but also in her community as well.

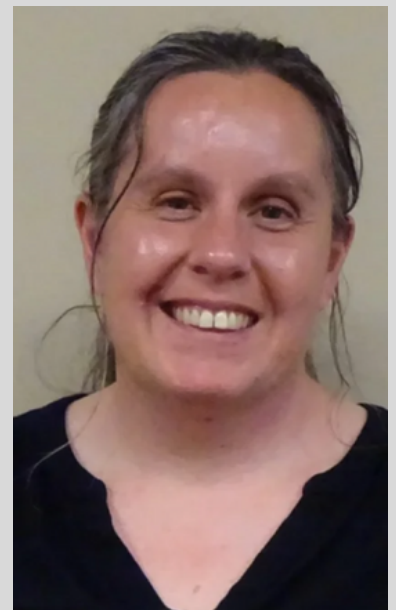
Congratulations Wendi on this well-deserved recognition. Thank you for all you do for our agency and the people you support!

## **DECEMBER 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH BETH ARGO**

Beth Argo is ACRC’s Acute Care Coordinator. She exemplifies professionalism, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to client care. She is known for her strong work ethic and her willingness to go above and beyond, whether that means assisting colleagues or dropping everything to support clients in the hospital. Her empathy and responsiveness make her an invaluable member of our team.

Highly efficient and reliable, Beth approaches every task with energy and enthusiasm. She takes initiative, leads and supports special projects, and consistently delivers exceptional results. Her ability to foster strong relationships with hospitals and external partners has significantly contributed to ACRC’s success.

Beth’s colleagues frequently praise her for her supportiveness and readiness to help. Her positive attitude and proactive approach set a high standard for excellence. Simply put, Beth’s contributions elevate both our team and the quality of care we provide.





## ACRC HOSTS OUR FIRST EMERGENCY RESOURCE FAIR



Alta California Regional Center's Emergency Resource Fair was a success - bringing together client communities, their families, and service providers for a day focused on health & safety, empowerment, and emergency preparedness. Held during National Preparedness Month, the fair connected approximately 300+ attendees with local community partners who offer hands-on resources and education throughout ACRC's ten-county service area. American Red Cross shared in-home safety materials, while the Placer County Sheriff's Office provided guidance on the Blue Envelope Program. Sacramento County Fire Dept. offered an interactive fire extinguisher simulation, and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities distributed more than 100 free emergency go-kits. Listos California supplied multilingual preparedness packets, and ACRC hosted its own booth featuring Deaf and hard-of-hearing resources alongside accessible emergency planning tools and educational opportunities. We also extend our gratitude to the many additional vendors whose participation in the fair helped enrich the event. With inclusive materials, demonstrations, and sensory-friendly supports, the fair strengthened community partnerships, promoted disability-inclusive emergency planning, and equipped families with the knowledge and confidence to prepare for emergencies.



## SPOTLIGHT ON TRAINING

2025 was another busy year for the Training Team. We contracted with UC Davis for our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Emerging Leadership/Manager Training. We continued working with the CircleUp Education vendor to offer Cultural Competency Training. Thanks to some new updates Cultural Competency Training is now offered online using an LMS website. Our ACRC All Staff LMS website also continued to improve with new updates and trainings.



***See page 17 for a full listing of staff training topics.***



All staff now have the ability to review T19 note training and learn more about how the new standardized IPP format incorporates person-centered thinking language. We also hosted two virtual open house experiences with ACRC vendors. This experience allowed ACRC staff to directly interact with the vendor to learn more about their services offered. ACRC continues to host and promote training sessions, workshops and webinars on multiple topics to our community. Topics include Supported Decision Making, Parent Advocacy, and Substance Use Disorder and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Training.

## CAPITOL TREE LIGHTING

We give our appreciation to our service providers for the wonderful ornaments for ACRC's tree at the Capitol this year. Thank you to our dedicated clients who braved the cold to help Executive Director Lori Banales decorate our regional center's tree.







## ACRC HOSTING LISTENING SESSIONS - LISTENING, LEARNING, AND GROWING TOGETHER

We are proud to dedicate our time and attention to engaging directly with our community. This past quarter, we focused on receiving valuable input through a series of Feedback and Listening Sessions, ensuring that the voices of those we serve are heard and reflected in our work.

We have hosted several meaningful sessions:

- Black/African American Families (9/30/25) – An in-person gathering, co-hosted with the State Council on Developmental Disabilities that fostered open dialogue and strengthened community connections.
- Individuals with Cerebral Palsy (10/23/25) – A virtual session that highlighted unique perspectives and needs.
- Aging Caregivers and Their Loved Ones (11/18/25) – A virtual conversation centered on the challenges and hopes of those caring for family members across generations.
- South Lake Tahoe Community (12/12/25) – A virtual session that brought together voices from across the region to share experiences and ideas.

These sessions have proven to be an effective way to gather input and suggestions on a variety of topics. By listening directly to our community, we gain insights that guide us in improving services and strengthening partnerships.

More sessions are planned for the coming year. Together, we are shaping a stronger, more responsive regional center—one conversation at a time.

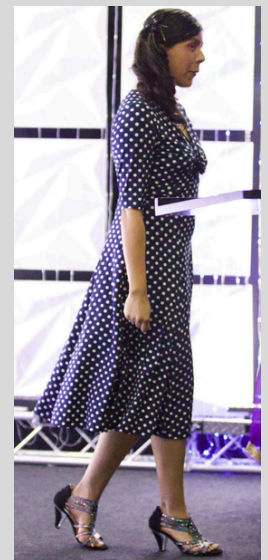
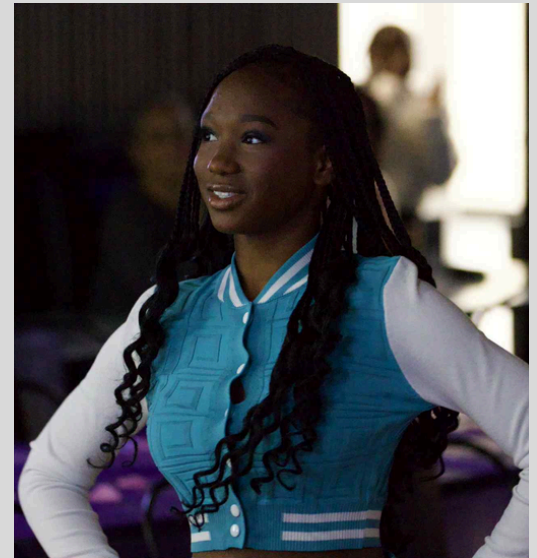
To learn about upcoming opportunities to participate in listening sessions please visit:

<https://www.altaregional.org/calendar>



# SUNSHINE DAY PROGRAM HOLDS FIRST ANNUAL FASHION SHOW

We are thankful Priscilla Holmes shared pictures of the recent event held by her day program. Learn more: <https://www.mysunnyday.org/>



## NOTICE: THE IMPORTANCE OF A SIGNED INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLAN

ACRC is required by law to have a signed Individual Program Plan (IPP) before we can implement services and supports. The IPP is a collaborative document that outlines the goals, services, and supports identified by you and your planning team.

In accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code 4646(g), ACRC cannot authorize or provide services until the IPP is signed. This step ensures that you have full participation in the planning process and that services are delivered according to your choices and needs. We encourage all clients and families to review and sign their IPP promptly so that services can begin without delay.





# FREE SUPPORT FOR YOUR FAMILY: INTRODUCING BRIGHTLIFE KIDS

The holiday season is often a whirlwind, bringing with it stress and big feelings for kids and caregivers alike. We want to share a valuable, free resource for your families: [BrightLife Kids](https://brightlife.kids/ca). This no-cost program is for kids ages 0–12 who live in California. Sign up at [brightlife.kids/ca](https://brightlife.kids/ca) today to access live, 1:1 video coaching sessions with a dedicated expert and on-demand digital resources.

## Infants/toddlers

### Coaching for new(ish) parents/caregivers

Learn about developmental milestones, manage separation anxiety, build patience, get kids to try new things, discover strategies for better sleep, and so much more.

## Kids

### Coaching for kids and their parents/caregivers

Work on how to express big feelings like sadness, worry, and anger in healthy ways, encourage age-appropriate learning, balance alone time with social time, and so much more.

## Tweens

### Coaching for preteens and their parents/caregivers

Learn to set boundaries on social media, manage peer pressure, nurture your tween's growing sense of independence, build self-esteem, confidence, and inclusivity, and so much more.



## WHO SHOULD YOU CALL WHEN YOU NEED ASSISTANCE?

Alta California Regional Center (ACRC) is dedicated to helping clients access the services and supports you need. Here is who to contact when you need immediate support.

Step 1: Call your Service Coordinator (SC).

Step 2: Call your SC's manager (Client Services Manager). Your SC's Manager's name and phone number is listed at the bottom of your SC's email signature line.

Step 3: Call one of ACRC's Directors of Client Services: Jennifer Bloom @ (916) 978-6572 or Mechelle Johnson @ (916) 978-6653

*\*Please note that our reception desk is ready to assist you in connecting with the person you need to reach. Please call: (916) 978-6400.\**

ACRC is committed to meeting your needs through excellent customer service.

## CAREGIVER - A ROLE WE LEAST EXPECTED

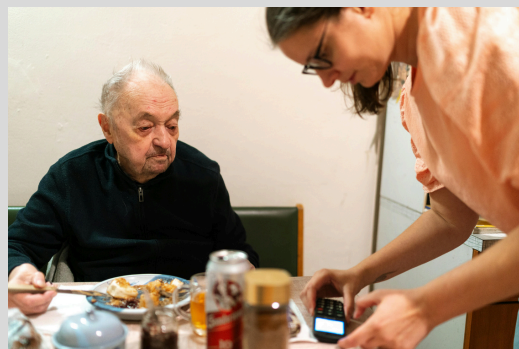
PEGGY A. ROSSI, BSN/MPA - RN/PHN

Whew, the holidays are over for 2025, but as a family caregiver of a loved one, you dread the thought of those to come as the new year approaches. You realize you now have to think about those to come in 2026 and tell yourself, "I love the holidays, but I already have a full plate. And why do I take on more as each holiday approaches?" Yes, you want to continue traditions, but you no longer have the energy or the time, so you panic! You are already overwhelmed and stressed, and you know in your heart you can add no more.

As any of us know, family caregiving is not for the faint of heart. It is hard work, not only physically, but in far too many instances, if not careful, the toll is more intense both emotionally and mentally. Add the holidays, and this only magnifies guilt, more exhaustion, and grief to your already overflowing plate of feelings. So, my tips are:

1. Do not tackle your role alone. Learn to say yes and no appropriately and at the right time.
2. Learn to take care of yourself. This means making time for 10-minute breaks several times per day for 'me time'. Self-care is not selfish; it is essential.
3. Keep a calendar and a list of family and friends who are willing to help. Then let them help and assume as many duties as possible, even if they are duties you have traditionally handled. Your goal is to reset your boundaries and relieve any unnecessary stress.
4. Seek ways to get away and rest (in healthcare, we call it "respite"). This means working with your loved one's health plan to identify providers who can meet your loved one's needs (medically or behaviorally) while allowing you to get away for a few days.
5. Seek out any Intellectual/Developmental support groups (local or online; in our age of technology, many are telephonic). The goal is to learn from others what works and what does not.

Remember, your goal is to have time to reduce your stress, with the primary aim of having at least a little fun and eliminating added chaos and stress.



*You can learn more about ACRC's efforts to support aging caregivers here:*

<https://www.altaregional.org/coordinated-future-planning> 12



# SANTA DAY 2025

Kudos to our amazing staff volunteers that created another memorable Santa Day for our community.



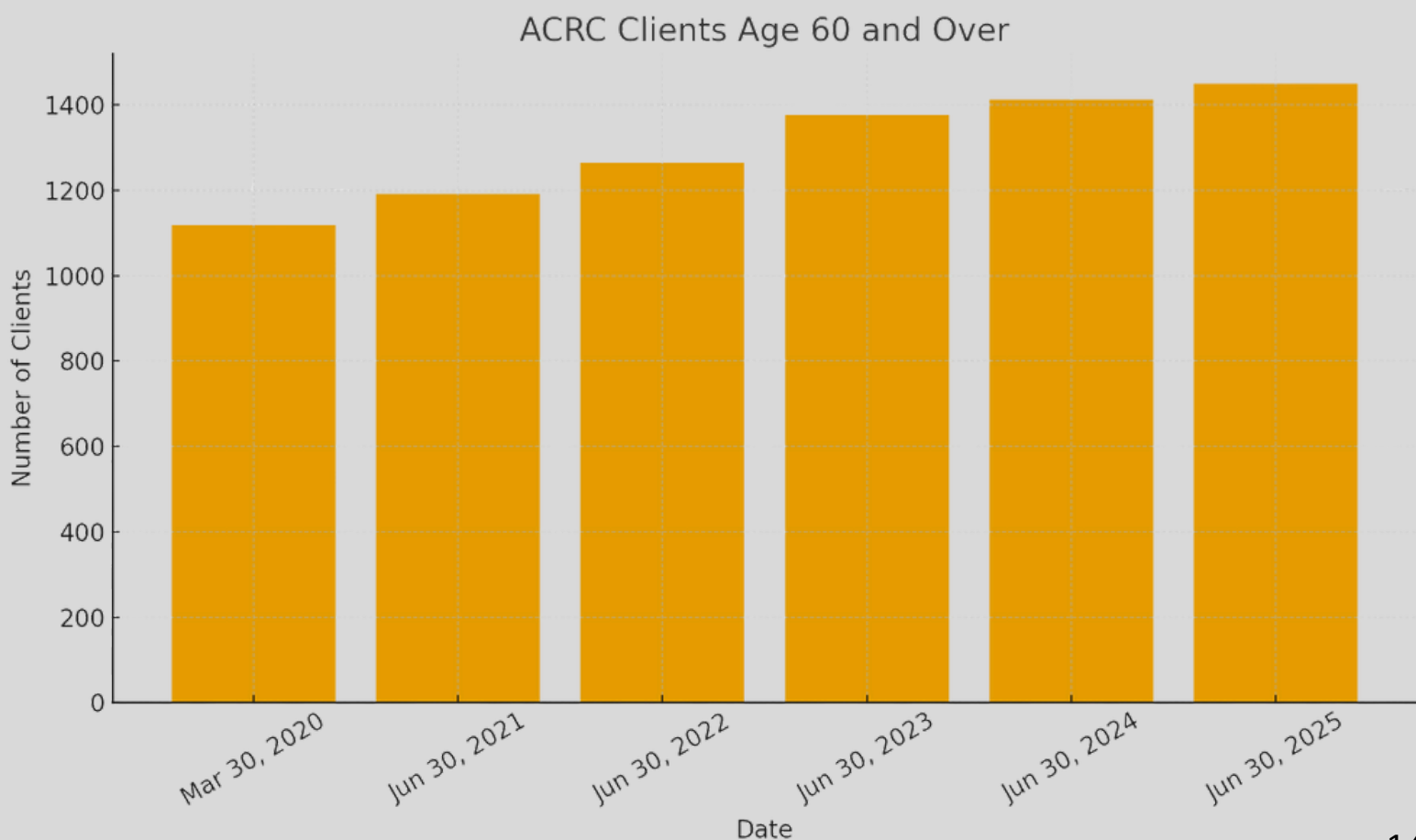
## STEADY GROWTH IN AGING POPULATION

ACRC's data reflects a sustained increase in the number of clients age 60 and older. Between March 2020 and June 2025, the population of older adults served by ACRC grew from 1,119 to 1,449 individuals—an increase of 330 people, or 29.5 percent over five years. This steady growth shows that people with developmental disabilities are living longer lives.

ACRC continues to focus on meeting the needs of aging clients and their caregivers, through several initiatives:

- Statewide and National Engagement-ACRC meets monthly with clients, family members, advocates, and community stakeholders to support the needs of aging clients and caregivers.
- AB3291/Coordinated Future Planning-Service Coordinators are trained to identify and document the housing needs of clients and support needs for caregivers.
- Housing Development-ACRC actively pursues opportunities to support a range of different housing options for regional center clients.
- Assistive Technology Pilot-Supporting clients in their preferred environment with the use of technology
- Direct Support Collaborative and Vendedored Services-In collaboration with Valley Mountain Regional Center, ACRC has launched a website and job fairs to support the hiring needs of service providers.

These initiatives reflect ACRC's ongoing commitment to supporting aging adults and their caregivers as their needs change.





## RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Much of our year revolved around collaborating with our Accounting Department to implement the State's Rate Study. As we focused on this task, we continued to process new vendorizations and are pleased to report continued growth in three vendor types frequently requested by our stakeholders.

### New Service Providers by Year

2017 - 190  
 2018 - 185  
 2019 - 184  
 2020 - 165  
 2021 - 149  
 2022 - 188  
 2023 - 252  
 2024 - 333  
**2025 - 325**

Vendor Type	2025	2024
Residential Care Homes	<b>76</b>	57
Supported Living Agency	<b>25</b>	19
Speech Therapy	<b>23</b>	14

## FEATURED ARTIST CHRISTINA SWART



Christina Swart has been attending Neighborhood Center of the Arts since 2008. Christina enjoys working on painting canvases, pottery and multimedia artwork. Christina's inspiration comes from nature and incorporating colorful colors into her artwork. She appreciates a creative challenge and bringing her ideas to life through her artwork. If you are interested in purchasing any of Christina's variety of artworks, pottery and multi-media, please feel free to check out:

Neighborhood Center of the Arts

200 Litton Drive Ste #212

Grass Valley, CA 95945

Hours of Operation: Studio Hours M-F 9am-2pm

Phone: (530) 272-7287

Email: [NCAADMIN@NCCN.NET](mailto:NCAADMIN@NCCN.NET)

Instagram: [@ncagrassvalley](https://www.instagram.com/ncagrassvalley)

Facebook: Neighborhood Center of the Arts | Grass Valley CA |

Facebook

Etsy: [NCAGrassValley](https://www.etsy.com/shop/NCAGrassValley) - Etsy



## 2025 STAFF TRAININGS

Name	Facilitator	Name	Facilitator
Emerging Leadership/Manager Training	UC Davis	SDP Workshop	IFTA
Substance Use Disorder and IDD Training	Dr. Lori Eldridge	Caregiver Education and Support Group	Turning Point Community Programs
Maxim Healthcare Virtual Open House	Vendor	Housing Rights Landlord/Tenant Issues Webinar	Disability Rights CA/ ACRC
Happy Ladders Virtual Open House	Vendor	Supported Decision Making Workshop	ACRC
Cultural Competency	CircleUp Education	Deaf, Strong, and Health Community Event - Workshop	Sacramento County
Standardized IPP	ACRC All Staff LMS	Communicating the Danger: Prenatal Fentanyl Exposure	SACCounty Healthy Beginnings
T19 Note Training	ACRC All Staff LMS	Parent Advocacy: Tips for Advocating for your Child in Special Education	ACRC
Procedural Safeguards and Parents Rights	SCDD	IEP Special Education Workshop	Warmline Family Resource Center
LOIS Town Hall	DDS	Medicaid and Supporting People wi/ I/DD	ARCA
Supported Decision Making Workshop	ACRC	Supported Decision Making Workshop	ACRC
Turning 3 Years Old	ACRC	Hiring Workshop	DDS, CalABLE, TkMomentum
SacRT Workshops	SacRT	Stigma and Bias in the Healthcare System	SACCounty Healthy Beginnings
LOIS Virtual Town Hall	DDS	FAQ's in Special Education Webinar	ACRC
Supported Decision Making Workshop	ACRC	Medicaid Cuts Are No Longer Just A Proposal	SCDD
Substance Use Disorder and IDD Training	Dr. Lori Eldridge	Procedural Safeguards and Parents Rights Workshop	DDS
Understanding the Special Education Process and IEP	ACRC		
Self-Determination Program (SDP) Walkthrough	DDS		