



AUGUST 2009

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"Perseverance is a great element of success. If you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake up somebody."

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The current economic downturn is a stressful time with budget cuts, job losses, wage freezes, and housing foreclosures. For families with children with special needs, the stress can be that much greater due to dependence upon a variety of services from agencies, both public and non-profit, that have been severely impacted by these challenging financial times. Now, more than ever, it is important to be organized and informed as you persevere in advocating for your child.

Getting Organized

School budgets are suffering under the restraints of this economy, yet your child's needs have not decreased. It is imperative that schools and parents work together to be "smarter" and "leaner." You will see changes in class sizes, subject offerings, and staffing. Organizing your child's IEP paperwork will put you in a better position to track their needs and progress towards goals, while also giving you greater clarity when discussing with the school effective and efficient ways to address their needs. [Click here](#) for the **Matrix packet "Getting Organized"** to help you get started (this packet and others are also available on [our website](#)). Matrix also has an upcoming workshop titled **"Advocating for Your Child's Special Education and Individual Education Plan"** to help you learn how to build an IEP to meet your child's needs, ask the right questions, and communicate your views --[see below](#) for more details. Remember, we are all in this together and schools remain committed to meeting the educational needs of all children in Special Education and General Education.

Organization is also important for keeping track of your child's medical records and the records kept by other agencies such as Regional Centers. You are entitled to copies of your child's records within 3 days for Regional Centers and 5 days for schools. Don't ask for copies of papers you don't need or want, but make sure to have copies of all assessments, IEPs, IPPs, etc. Put these in a binder or file folders labeled in a way that makes sense so that you have the information you need to be factual and specific when presenting your concerns.

Changes in Regional Center Services

On July 28, 2009 California enacted a State Budget that implements historic changes to Early Start and the Lanterman Act (the legislation that created and directs the Regional Centers); these changes will have a serious impact on people with developmental disabilities and their families. The budget implements a \$334 million cut in services and an additional 3% cut to Regional Centers and the rates they pay service providers. The most significant changes apply to Early Start, the Regional Center program for children under 3 years of age. For a good overview read the [Summary of Changes developed by Area Board 5 on Developmental Disabilities](#).

For more detailed information on specific changes including: elimination of specific services to be authorized; limits on behavior and other services; and changes to eligibility for Early Start services, the organization [Disability Rights California](#) has Fact Sheets

for each area that is affected.

The site www.cbp.org also provides information on the impact of budget cuts on California families.

State Social Services Cuts

Significant changes have also been made to the following programs:

- **Healthy Families**, California's low cost health insurance program for children and teens now has a waiting list.
- **Medi-Cal** benefits for most adults age 21+ have been reduced. Important services that have been eliminated include dental, speech, psychology, and incontinence supplies. [Click here](#) for a full listing of eliminated services.
- **In Home Support Services (IHSS)** is eliminating services for recipients who are not the most severely impaired and will require finger-printing of recipients and providers.
- **CalWORKS** has new restrictions as well and most other social services programs have suffered severe cuts.

For a program by program summary of cuts in social services follow [this link](#).

By providing you with this information here and on [our website](#) we aim to help you stay informed and empowered. These are difficult times, but our children need us to persevere. Let us not forget the incredible lifework of [Eunice Kennedy Shriver](#) who passed away this week. She was a great advocate for the disenfranchised and a trailblazer for the rights of the disabled -- "an extraordinary woman who, as much as anyone, taught our nation — and our world — that no physical or mental barrier can restrain the power of the human spirit." May we all carry on her work.

MATRIX NEWS

Marin Workshop: Advocating for your Child's Special Education Individual Education Plan. *Thursday, October 1, 2009, 9 AM to Noon, Matrix Novato Office.* Learn key Special Education facts, how to build an IEP to meet your child's needs, ask the right questions, and communicate your views. Pre-registration required.

Marin Workshop: Abogando Para El I.E.P. De Sus Hijos. Sabado, October 17, 2009, 10 AM to Noon, Canal Alliance #3. Aprenda a abogar y a preguntar las preguntas correctas en el I.E.P de su hijo.

For more information or to register for upcoming Matrix workshops please call 415.884.3535. We also have information on [our website](#) on upcoming trainings and workshops and will be posting our 2009-2010 training schedules for each county as they become available.

Fairfield Support Group: Coming this fall! A support group for parents and other family members with children who have an **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**. Led by a Parent Advisor who has two children on the spectrum, this group will meet once a month in the Fairfield office (1615 West Texas Street, Suite 4) for support and information sharing. If you are interested in attending, please contact Chris at chrisa@matrixparents.org or call 707-423-2545 ext. 101 for more information.

A BIG Thank You to:

ACADEMY STUDIOS for inviting us to their amazing creative space (described by one guest as "a small Universal Studios") for our August 6th benefit event. Special appreciation to CEO Dean Weldon, Alcatraz Traveling Exhibit Project Director Deborah Darlington, and Graphic Designer Paulina Paczkowska.

Event Sponsors:

PEROTTI & CARRADE, CPA'S; and Kelley & Farren, LLP.

Treasure Box Donors:

Alcatraz Cruises; The Tuscan Inn, Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco; Buena Vista Café, San Francisco; Novato Lock, Downtown Shop; Trader Joe's, Novato.

Alcatraz Experts Don Martin & John Martini whose willingness to share their knowledge and experience added to a fascinating event!

Planning Committee Members: Barbara Alexander; Deborah Darlington; Dixie James; Don Martin; Mary Jo Sorensen; Barbara Watson.

And all of YOU who donated, attended, and provided encouragement for this first time event—we look forward to seeing more of you in the future!

We're pleased to announce that our **3rd Annual Author's Luncheon**, scheduled for early Spring, 2010, will be chaired by Tammy Mobley and Becky Foust. Watch for more news in September!

Golf Anyone?: June, 2010 will be the date of the **1st Annual Matrix Golf Tournament**. You can plan, play, sponsor, or just join us for dinner. Interested? Call Brenda at 415-475-2118.

MORE USEFUL INFORMATION

Connecting People to Resources: An Autism

Information and Resource Fair. *Saturday, September 12, 2009, 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM, Dominican University, San Rafael.* Matrix will be a vendor and presenter at this upcoming resource and information fair. There will be plenty of parking, easy access to vendors, and childcare for families who want to attend the mini-workshops to gain tips and suggestions on how to support their child, teen or adult with ASD from experts in the field. There is NO cost to come and connect with the many vendors (in addition to Matrix, vendors will include: School Programs, Adult Day and Residential programs, Research Programs, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Education Specialists, Post Secondary Programs, Social Recreational Programs, Government Agencies, Parent Resource Agencies, Authors, and Technology). For more information contact Karen Kaplan at karensupportsu@comcast.net. See [flyer](#) or [our website](#) for more details.

Matrix is pleased to be a part of the **P.E.A.K. Initiative (Partnership for Early Access for Kids)** -- a Solano-county wide multi-agency collaborative with the overarching goal of earlier identification of infants and children with special needs in order to link them with needed services prior to reaching school age, thus improving their developmental potential. [Click here](#) for a full calendar of PEAK trainings and events for Summer/Fall 09.

Marin Autism Lecture Program in partnership with Marin Autism Collaborative -- [Upcoming Lectures: Navigating the Social World: A Social Skills Curriculum for HFA and Asperger and related disorders.](#)

September 15, 2009, 12 PM to 2 PM, Marin County Office of Education.

Skillfully Matching Your Response to Problem Behavior Based on the Behavior's Function. *October 6, 2009, 12 PM to 2 PM, Marin County Office of Education.*

Healdsburg Parents Special Education Meeting

Monday, Aug. 31, 2009, 6:30 to 8 PM, HHS Library,
Topic: **"IEPs. What Don't You Know?" A mini-training on IEPs.** Speaker: Chris Allen of Matrix Parent Network. Babysitting will be provided. Call Nikki to arrange: 707.433.4678. Spanish translator is expected to attend. See [Flyer](#) for more details about this group and upcoming meetings.

13th Annual Self-Advocacy Conference: "Our Lives

Aren't Negotiable: Don't Dis-COUNT Us Out!!"

September 22 - 9:30am - 3:30pm

*Milton Marks Conference Center, 445 Golden Gate Ave,
San Francisco.*

Please pre-register, must be postmarked by Friday,
September 11, 2009. No walk-ins allowed. Limited
seating available. For more information, see [Flyer](#)
or contact Nancy Lin at 415-832-5687 or Annette Vitali-
Thompson at 415-503-4460.

Matrix serves families in 4 counties: Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma, with offices in Novato and Fairfield.

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