

REGIONAL CENTER OF THE EAST BAY **HELPING HAND FUND**

Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB) is a non-profit 501(c)3 agency under contract with the State Department of Developmental Services. RCEB is funded annually in accordance with State law (Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act). RCEB's State allocation is restricted to funding only what is mandated under the Lanterman Act.

DESCRIPTION OF RCEB HELPING HAND FUND

Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB) serves over 18,000 people with developmental disabilities including intellectual disabilities, Autism, Epilepsy, and Cerebral Palsy in the East Bay counties of Alameda and Contra Costa. Our mission is to enable and support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to achieve their full potential and rightful place in our community.

The RCEB **Helping Hand Fund** is our donation fund which is used entirely (100%) for client services and/or supports that cannot be purchased or funded with State funds. The funds are either given as loans (with no interest and a very flexible repayment schedules) or as grants. Funds in the **Helping Hand** account were raised by a combination of endeavors such as payroll deductions from RCEB staff, fundraising, donations from our community (family/members), and grants from our community partners. Our biggest community contributor has been the Clif Bar Family Foundation (<http://www.clifbar.com/article/clif-bar-family-foundation>) who has provided several generous grants to the Helping Hand Fund. No State of California funds are deposited into this account as no state funds allocated under our contract can be transferred to the **Helping Hand Fund**.

Our **Helping Hand Fund** provides small grants and loans to RCEB clients, individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members who have emergency needs that cannot be addressed through any other resource. In all cases, the funds must directly benefit the RCEB client. These emergency needs are identified through the RCEB's Case Managers' close interaction with their clients. The needs range from deposit assistance to secure low-income housing, to paying to get an automobile out of the repair shop in order for parents to be able to take their child to a specialized program, paying to get utilities turned back on, paying for funeral services expenses for a low income family unable to afford these costs. Many clients, due to their disabilities and low incomes, are at a high risk of being taken advantage of financially, and by the time a problem has been discovered, a client may be facing severe and heartbreaking consequences. The **Helping Hand Fund** is set up to respond quickly to avoid these tragedies and to take advantage of temporary opportunities where a small amount of money will result in great benefit.

SELECTION PROCESS

The clients who utilize the **Helping Hand Fund** are developmentally disabled individuals and their families, who struggle with the challenges of living independently rather than living in a closely monitored board and care situation. In exchange for the opportunity to have a self-directed, empowered life, they face the highest risk of facing small emergencies which can easily end up with grave consequences. Individuals that are served by this fund must be a RCEB client and must reside in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

All requests for **Helping Hand Fund** loans and grants are initiated directly from the Case Managers and their supervisors, who submit a written request to the **Helping Hand Fund** committee. Clients should contact their RCEB Case Manager directly for more information if they would like to pursue a Helping Hand Fund request. The committee is made up of the RCEB Executive Director, RCEB Director of Consumer Services and RCEB Director of Finance or their designees. The decision of the committee is considered final. The committee ensures that all generic resources are exhausted before funds from the **Helping Hand** are disbursed. The goal of the committee is to take a person-focused approach to the decision making. If the committee approves, the request is forwarded to the accounting department for immediate processing. The funding process is designed to be flexible enough that, under emergency circumstances, the time from request to check disbursement can take less than 24 hours.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The **Helping Hand Fund** is maintained separate from all other Regional Center funds and operations, and the Fund's integrity is validated by RCEB's outside auditors on an annual basis. One of the Fund's most dependable sources of revenue has been voluntary bi-weekly payroll contributions from Regional Center staff who have first-hand knowledge of the role the **Helping Hand Fund** plays in developmentally disabled individuals' lives. 100% of the **Helping Hand Fund** goes directly to financially assisting our clients and families. No administrative overhead, nor fees nor costs are taken from this fund. Funds are maintained in an interest bearing account. Upon request, Donors can receive a summary of supports and goods provided by their donation to the **Helping Hand Fund**. All donors to the **Helping Hand Fund** receive a letter acknowledging their donation to a 501(c)3 organization. All donations to the **Helping Hand Fund** are tax deductible within the provisions of the law.

SUMMARY

There are many organizations such as Catholic Charities and Salvation Army that provide aid with resources such as shelter, food and clothing during time of emergency however none are targeted to serving our community's members with developmental disabilities. RCEB Case Managers are required to exhaust all possibilities of community resources before requesting a **Helping Hand Fund** grant or loan on behalf of a client. In most cases, we find small loans or grants are not just not available from other organizations, especially in these challenging economic times. Regional Center of the East Bay's **Helping Hand Fund** allows immediate assistance and support to a very vulnerable population in times of need.

Annually, the **Helping Hand Fund** is expected to issue about 75 loans and grants, totaling more than \$40,000. These loans and grants have a ripple effect, impacting many people associated with the developmentally disabled individuals and their families, who are prevented from falling through the cracks when small emergencies arise. By enabling more developmentally disabled people to remain independent, with stable shelter, and meaningful lives, the benefit truly reaches throughout the entire community.