

CISS NEWSLETTER NEW YEAR EDITION



HAPPENINGS * HIGHLIGHTS * EVENTS & MORE!



just relax



CISS is committed to offering programs that improve the quality of life of the families and individuals served.

We now provide Respite Care to Regional Center and RFA families, Independent Living Skills, and Coordinated Family Supports.

Please contact us to learn more about how these services can offer support for you and your family members.



Channel Islands Social Services
Celebrating 21 Years!
(805)384-0983 www.IslandSocialServices.org



From our Director



MAY THIS NEW YEAR TAKE YOU PLACES YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN BEFORE.

"CHEERS TO AN AMAZING 2026!"

With January comes the excitement of new opportunities and plans for the new year, while also providing an opportunity to reflect on the past year. 2025 was a time for growth and change in all the CISS programs, including Respite, Independent Living Skills (ILS), RFA (respite for foster and kinship families) and our newest program, Coordinated Family Support (CFS). I was fortunate to come on board mid-year and have been swept up in learning about and growing with this incredible team and learning about each of these services. Although we have grown, I have truly appreciated the teams' tireless efforts to maintain the quality of our services and support – not an easy feat during times of change.

The CFS program has been a highlight the past few months, having hired 7 new team members to support growth. The program was developed to support families who have an adult child with developmental disabilities living at home with them. This team can assist with accessing resources such as benefits and housing, futures planning, and much more. It has been truly rewarding and humbling to partner with families to navigate some of these challenging issues.

As we look ahead into 2026, we will continue to prioritize innovation in all our programs. We are committed to providing individualized services to our community and to supporting our team members who are truly the heartbeat of CISS. We will be focusing on many areas that include additional team training, added social programs, and the roll out of Personal Assistance Services (a perfect fit for our well-versed respite team). It's going to be a busy year!

I feel a true sense of gratefulness and pride. I'd like to pass along a sincere thank you to the CISS team, partner agencies and to the individuals and families who place their trust in our support. Cheers to an amazing 2026, may we live well, acknowledge kindness and spread kindness towards others – it truly can change lives.



HAPPY NEW YEAR, KAREN



Holiday Memories

FAMILY MOVIE DAY



In December, we held our CISS Family Movie Day bringing together the many families we have the privilege of serving across Ventura County. They were able to watch a sensory friendly screening of Zootopia 2 and enjoy the holiday cheer with fun, laughter and the warmth of good friendships.



HOLIDAY CHEER

Every holidays season, our administrative team comes together to give back to the community in various ways. Whether it's volunteering at local vendor events or surprising our nominated families with thoughtful gifts and home visits, we strive to brighten their homes and spread a little hope and love. Even small acts of kindness can make a big difference during the holidays.



The holidays are not as much about opening presents but rather a time to open our hearts.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

“Blessings to you, who have the love to do this work. Lets keep it going for those who need it.”



MEET REUBEN!

Hi there, I am Reuben Valdez. My grandson is Dominic and do respite with him. I am a retiree of AT&T phone. I used to work in the field installing and repairing the phone lines, commercial and residential services.

When I retired in 2010, my 1st grandson, Dominic, was born 2 weeks later. Since mommy and daddy worked, as well as grandma, I became his daycare. It was around four years old when we noticed something about Dominic. Mommy and Daddy had him tested and found out that he was on the autism spectrum.

He was happiest by himself, then lil’ brother and sister showed up. The joy they brought to him was unbelievable. Dominic didn’t speak much but then when you spoke to him, he would respond in a full sentence.

I have learned a lot about kids on the spectrum and their needs. It takes a lot of patience, time and love, but when they say their first words or speak their minds, it is a blessing and a reward. All children are a blessing. Dominic loves trains, legos and movies, Up!, Back to the Future, Tom and Jerry, and Titanic. He also loves bowling, just not loud cheering. We try to keep it low key but still ever so proud.

Dominic, mommy and I were in the Acorn newspaper when a train convention was at the station some years back (see image.) He loves creating videos and while at Valley View Middle School, he was part of a team that won an award for short video format. He has become a very sweet boy and grown so much. We are still learning from him how to be better people.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS



DISCOVER NEW FRIENDSHIPS!

Check out these exciting programs by clicking on their logo!

There are many different resources in Ventura County.
We encourage you to check out each organization listed below!



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SUPPORT MORE FAMILIES

LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

[click here!](#)

RECRUITMENT BOARD

VENTURA

- Likes: dinosaur toys, Legos, and watching Sonic videos on YouTube
- Preferred Schedule: Saturdays & Sundays
- 6 year old male with Autism, DHH, and visual impairment

NEWBURY PARK

- Likes: Disney, Yo Gabba Gabba, and Baby Einstein
- Preferred Schedule: Weekdays from 3pm to 9pm
- 18 year old female with Autism and Intellectual Disability

MOORPARK

- Likes: shopping, watching movies, music, and dancing
- Preferred Schedule: Weekdays
- 39 year old female with Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability

JOB OPPORTUNITIES!

Do you know someone who would be a great Respite Caregiver, ILS Instructor, or CFS Facilitator?

Help us find great people!

You may be eligible for a \$250 bonus for referring someone to us to work with multiple families across different departments. Certain criteria applies.

Contact your assigned HRA for more details!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Ventura County Events!



JURASSIC QUEST:

Jurassic Quest will take place at the Ventura County Fairgrounds in Ventura, CA, from January 9 to 11, 2026. This exciting event will showcase realistic animatronic dinosaurs, fossil digs, rides, bounce houses, and opportunities to meet baby dinosaurs, providing a fun-filled experience for the entire family. Expect large-scale dinosaurs, interactive play zones, and activities such as fossil digs and dino rides.



NIGHT TO REMEMBER

A Night to Remember has been hosting the most spectacular party in Ventura County, honoring some of the most incredible, amazing, and beautiful individuals in our community: students with disabilities. This free prom, organized by Mission Church, celebrates students with disabilities aged 12 to 25. Each guest—our students with disabilities—receives everything they need for an unforgettable experience at no cost, including a dress or tuxedo, professional makeup and hairstyling, a ride in a limousine, formal photographs, a walk down the red carpet with enthusiastic paparazzi, a live DJ, delicious food, and a student host. This years party will be held 3/13/2026.



Find out more and or register here: <https://www.ntrventura.com/media>



UPCOMING CISS POP UPS: *Meet us in the community!*

- 3/21- Conejo Valley Disabilities Fair
- 3/25 - CLU Career & Intern Expo





Celebrating Milestones

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION!

5 years!

Alexander P.
Alexis D.
Angel M.
Brook L.
Cara M.
Carmen H.
Citlally M.
Derek W.
Diane G.
Dillon A.
Doreen A.
Francisca M.
Gloria P.
Hanna T.
Heather V.
Jennifer W.
Jocelyn L.
Judith B.
Julio C.

Karla V.
Lacey B.
Lilandra M.
Lynlee H.
Maria R.
Maria S.
Michelle R.
Mirana M.
Monica V.
Nina S.
Vanessa A.

10 years!

Ana B.
Blanca R.
Cassandra C.
Jasmine D.
Mary B.
Monica R.
Naela E.
Teresa B.

15 years!

Esperanza B.
Josefina M.
Norma R.
Sandra L.

20 years!

Gabriel G.
Margarita M.
Maria C.
Robin K.
Rosa P.



EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER



Denise P.



Polly C.



Reuben V.



Sophia M.



Valerie V.



Yvonne G.

Others

Evelyn S
Hildegarth G.
Joanna B.
Robin K.



Meet The Harlans



Tell us about your Family

I'm a single mother of two children who keep life rich with curiosity, creativity, and growth. My son, Gehrig (11), is on the autism spectrum and thrives with structure and creative outlets.

He participates in social skills development and other supportive classes, and we really value caregivers who reinforce those strategies. My daughter, Rebecca (8), is bright, imaginative, and always eager to help others.

We follow an independent study/hybrid learning model that blends academic guidance with flexibility. Their father and I co-parent cooperatively from separate households and share a supportive approach to raising the kids. We may live independently, but we are both very involved and committed to their well-being.



What do you enjoy most about respite services?

Respite care provides space for me to tend to personal health and well-being during times when bringing my children isn't feasible, such as appointments or short windows of rest and reset.

What do your children enjoy most about respite services?

For Gehrig, caregiver engagement is key. Our home is a limited-technology environment, as we've learned that too much screen time or video binging can increase his agitation. He is much more regulated when involved in open-ended, hands-on activities like crochet, drawing, building, or projects that engage his mind at his own pace. Caregivers who patiently participate in tactile or skill-based activities with him help build his confidence and emotional resilience.

Rebecca loves when providers actively connect with her creativity and initiative. She enjoys being helpful and included and responds well to caregivers who see her as a capable developing individual, not just a little sister.

Any advice for other families using respite?

Use the support before you feel burnt out. Try to schedule respite care around necessary personal health or restorative time, and give yourself permission to benefit from it. Support is not only for critical moments, it's meant to help protect your energy and create space to show up as the parent you want to be. Leaning into small, restorative breaks can make all the difference in maintaining consistency and care.

As a single parent managing a real estate business and family needs, those moments make a meaningful difference. They give me the clarity and emotional capacity to return with calm, presence, and patience. When support is proactive, not just reactive, it sustains the whole family.

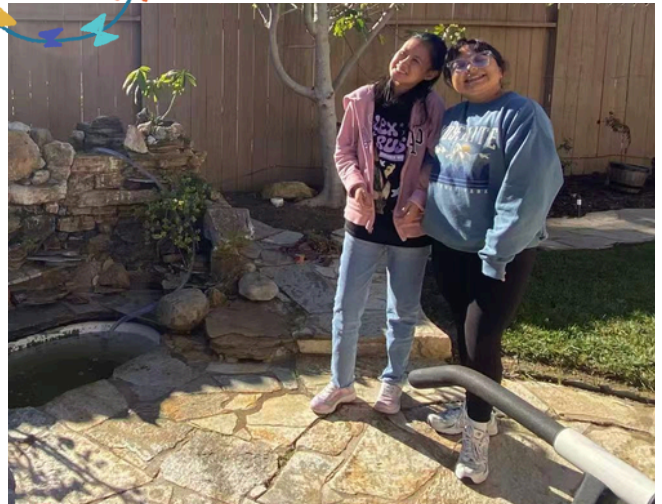


THE WANG FAMILY



Tell us a little about your family.

There are 4 people in my family, my wife and I with two daughters, Reya and Tiantian. Tiantian is Reya's younger sister who is a senior at Rancho Campana High School. My family likes to travel and Reya enjoys the hotel stay especially when the hotel has the swimming pools. My wife Jenny has been working for Amgen for many years. I worked for Bank of America over 20 years and retired last year.



As a parent, what do you love the most about receiving respite care?

Respite care truly helps us. Reya goes to her day program on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. When she comes back from the program, she seems very tired. With the respite care, she can have more time to rest and have energy for the next day's program.

What does your daughter enjoy the most about receiving respite services?

Almas has done a great job. Reya really likes to do coloring, reading, playing games, taking a walk in the backyard, etc. They have a great time together. Each Tuesday and Thursday, Reya is very excited to see Alma show up.



Any advice you can give other families on taking advantage of their respite services?

I highly recommend your services to any family with similar needs as we have.



ILS HIGHLIGHT



Meet Andrew!



How has your ILS Instructor supported you during the holiday season?

Now because I have a son, my ILS Instructor, Devin, is learning how to support me. I don't think he has had someone before who has had a kid. This is kind of opening his eyes. Devin and I are both learning together in this, and he is teaching me a lot in ILS. We will look things up together and then he teaches me in various ways.

What are you looking forward to this holiday season?"

Making tamales with my family. When I was younger my family would make tamales and I would always say "they are too spicy, they are too spicy". I used to always watch my mom make tamales but never paid attention because it's a long process. My favorite tamales are chicken. This holiday, I will be making them with my family.

Devin will come over and help if he is not busy to help us. He will get his hands in there too.

What would you like others to know about the importance of ILS

ILS program staff are there for you no matter what and all you have to do is reach out. The ILS team is a family and they are there to help you and help you grow!



enjoy every moment.



WELCOME NEW ADMIN!



ACCOUNTING & BENEFITS COORDINATOR

KARINA B.

Hi! I am very excited to be stepping into my new role as Accounting and Benefits Coordinator, where I will be supporting our Accounting team with general accounting duties. My background in accounting and payroll has given me the skills I need to support the team with accuracy and efficiency.

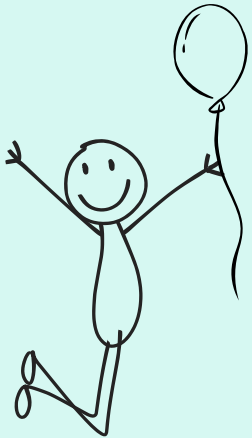
I am very passionate about Behavioral Health, and I am so excited to join a team that is JUST as passionate. I look forward to making a positive impact and growing together with such a dynamic team and company! Thank you CISS for all that you do for our community!



LET'S
CELEBRATE
you

CFS COORDINATOR DANIEL C.

As a new CFS Program Coordinator, I will be providing support and guidance for our CISS families. I have over 10 years of experience in behavioral health management roles and have worked with individuals of all ages. I have a Bachelor's degree from Long Beach State and am currently working on my Master's at California Lutheran University. I look forward to joining the CISS team and helping the CFS program excel!



Crafts & Recipes

Click on the images
for instructions!



Follow Us on Social Media & Don't miss out!



DID YOU KNOW?
We are a family-owned organization, and the only one in Ventura County that provides Respite, ILS and CFS!



FUN EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, GIVEAWAYS & MUCH MORE!

