



COLORADO OFFICE OF
**THE CHILD'S
REPRESENTATIVE**

General Assembly Report
Fiscal Year 2025



Mission

To give children and youth a voice in Colorado legal proceedings through high-quality legal representation that protects and promotes their safety, interests, and rights.

Vision

Justice, opportunity, and healthy families for all court-involved children and youth.

Values

Accountability

Colorado's children, attorneys, families, and communities can count on OCR to ensure that each decision we make and action we take advances our mission in a fair, equitable, inclusive, and transparent manner.

Efficiency

OCR strives to accomplish its mission and conserve resources by streamlining efforts, adhering to deadlines, resolving conflict constructively, and honoring well-defined projects, processes, and roles. We balance our drive to achieve with thoughtful planning and implementation.

Empowerment

OCR cultivates an environment of respect, honesty, and equity. We value the diverse experiences and expertise of the children we serve, our attorneys, and our staff. We invest time to reflect and connect, focus on strengths, value feedback, and recognize success. We stand for justice and support each other in our mission to empower children and youth.

Highlights of Fiscal Year 2025

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) was a year **devoted to youth rights and implementation of the Bill of Rights for Youth in Foster Care, HB24-1017 (FYBOR)**. HB24-1017 was a youth led initiative to ensure basic rights and dignity for Colorado's youth in foster care. The bill was effective August of 2024, and OCR hit the ground running to ensure thoughtful and thorough implementation with the goal of ensuring the rights became reality for youth in foster care. This began with training at the OCR's Fall Conference in September 2024, featuring youth involved in the creation and passage of the bill, and continued with:

- Development of the Notice and Advice of Rights in partnership with OCR's Lived Expert Action Panel (LEAP).
- Creation of handout containing a summary of the rights.
- Development of an interactive youth rights webpage.
- Drafting a sample omnibus motion for enforcement.
- Providing case staffings.
- Publishing a due process memo.
- Creating new online e-training modules related to FYBOR.
- Hosting a FYBOR webinar for community partners.

While advocacy for youth rights will be an ongoing effort, OCR has seen some creative and impactful litigation related to HB24-1017.

OCR launched **education litigation and advocacy enhancements in FY25**, including contracting with an education litigation specialist, and the program has had immediate positive impacts for youth who are system involved. The education litigation specialist assisted in 86 matters, from brief technical support to full representation. Matters ranged from school discipline proceedings, special education advocacy, discrimination complaints, and truancy support, with positive outcomes detailed later in this report.

Support covered:



12 Judicial Districts



14 Counties



19 School Districts

Case management, billing, and reporting was also top of mind this fiscal year as OCR drafted a **comprehensive RFP detailing the required specifications of OCR's proprietary case management and billing system, CARES, in preparation for a comprehensive update to this vital system**. OCR consistently heard from potential vendors that the RFP was exceptionally clear and thorough, resulting in a large pool of vendors. OCR looks forward to beginning this project in the upcoming fiscal year.

In its fourth year, OCR's **LEAP continued to thrive and influence training, policy, and legislation**, ensuring youth centered decision making and perspective. Ten amazing youth with lived experience participated in LEAP in FY25 and were involved in many aspects detailed below. In

the meantime, OCR was recently featured by the Family Justice Initiative for its data collection efforts around youth engagement and court attendance. Youth participation in their legal proceedings is an important practice recognized and encouraged by the American Bar Association (ABA), National Counsel for Child (NACC), and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). OCR continues to look for innovative ways to ensure youth engagement in their court proceedings.

OCR has also dedicated significant staff time to drafting **Amicus briefs** related to pivotal cases before the Colorado Supreme Court that directly impact youth rights and recent legislation, such as Counsel for Youth and the FYBOR. OCR believes it is a critical time to stand for youth rights; to ensure youth have procedural fairness and due process, in line with recent legislative reforms.

“I do trust her. When you have a conversation with her, she makes me comfortable. Everything I would tell her she would help me with it. When I told her what was going on with my house she gave me options and listened to give me ideas. She was always willing to help when I told her what was going on.”

– Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

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OCR Board of Directors

The Colorado Supreme Court appoints OCR's nine-member board (Board) in accordance with C.R.S. § 13-91-104 (2), which requires Board membership to include:

- three attorneys admitted to practice law in this state who have experience representing children/youth as Guardians *ad Litem* (GALs) or legal representatives,
- three non-attorneys who have experience advocating for children in the court system, and
- three citizens who are not attorneys and who have not served as CASA volunteers or child and family investigators.

Each Colorado Congressional District must be represented on the Board and no more than five members may be of the same political party. Board members serve without compensation for terms of four years and work cooperatively with OCR's Executive Director to provide governance to the office, fiscal oversight of the general operating budget, and participate in funding decisions related to OCR services. OCR's current Board:

- **Jean White (Chair)**
Citizen, Second Congressional District, Republican, *former Colorado Senator*.
- **Victoria Shuler (Vice-Chair)**
Advocate, Sixth Congressional District, Democrat, *Denver Director of Fostering Great Ideas*.
- **Margaret Fix Seboldt**
Attorney, Fourth Congressional District, Democrat, *Solo-Practitioner*.
- **Susan Ryan**
Attorney, Third Congressional District, Unaffiliated, *Holland and Hart (Aspen)*.
- **Angela Rose**
Advocate, Fifth Congressional District, Unaffiliated, *Executive Director CASA of the Pikes Peak Region*.
- **Vacancies**
There are four vacancies on the Board, and filling these vacancies has been significantly more challenging in the last few years. OCR continues to search for members that meet statutory criteria.

OCR LEAP Members

LEAP is [OCR's Lived Experts Action Panel](#), formed in 2021. LEAP's goals are to provide young adults with lived expertise in child welfare and juvenile justice systems opportunities to:

- Share experiences, feedback, and ideas about OCR attorneys and court with supportive peers and adults;
- Grow personal and professional networks;
- Learn about topics they want to learn about, as well as what OCR does and what OCR attorneys do;

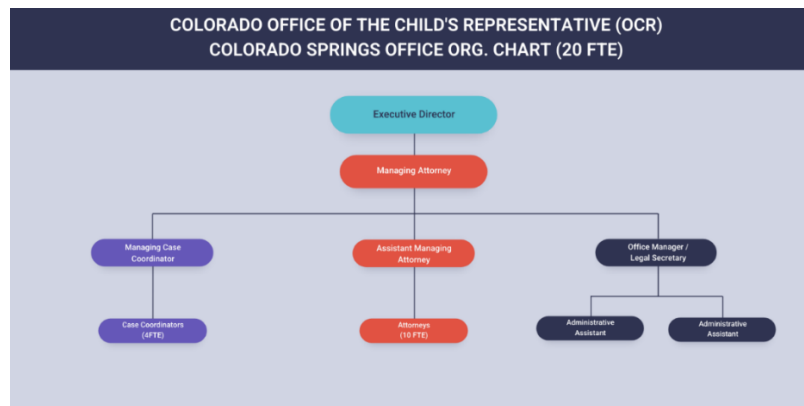
- Gain skills and knowledge they can use in their everyday lives; and
- Participate in OCR's efforts to create and improve laws, policies, and OCR attorney practice in ways that serve the best interests of youth.

LEAP's current members¹ are:

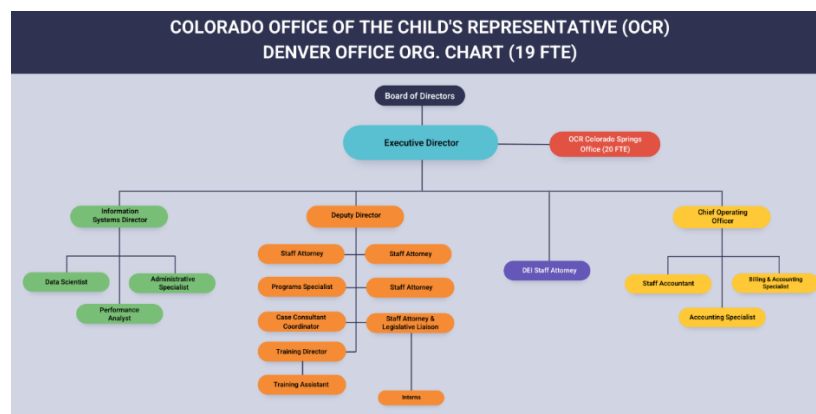
- **Maya Chandler**
- **Shelby Costello**
- **Nyomi Davis**
- **Emilio Flores**
- **Lexi Jones**
- **Alisiana Medina**
- **Maddie Lang-Silva**
- **Braeden (last name withheld at Braeden's request)**

OCR Staff

OCR comprises an Executive Office located in the Ralph Carr Judicial Center at 1300 Broadway, Suite 320, Denver, CO 80203, and the Colorado Springs office, a multidisciplinary law office that provides high-quality GAL and CFY representation to children and youth in the 4th Judicial District. The Colorado Springs Office is managed by Nicole Lyells and includes 11 additional case-carrying attorneys, 5 case consultants (CCs), and administrative support staff.



OCR's Executive Office is led by Executive Director, Chris Henderson, and his staff:



¹ Only members who have given permission are listed. LEAP consists of 10 members.

Agency Overview

The Office of the Child’s Representative (“OCR”) was created by the Colorado General Assembly in 2000, through House Bill 00-1371, to improve representation for Colorado’s most vulnerable children and youth. OCR’s enabling legislation and mandates are found in Colorado Revised Statute §13-91-101 et seq. and require the OCR to:

- ➔ Ensure provision of uniform, high-quality legal representation to children involved in judicial proceedings in Colorado.
- ➔ Enhance the provision of guardian ad litem (“GAL”) or Counsel for Youth (“CFY”) services in Colorado.
- ➔ Provide high-quality, accessible training throughout the state.
- ➔ Make recommendations to the Colorado Chief Justice concerning practice standards.
- ➔ Provide oversight to ensure compliance with the established practice standards.
- ➔ Establish fair and realistic compensation for state-appointed GALs and CFY sufficient to attract and retain high-quality, experienced attorneys to serve as GALs or CFY.
- ➔ Work cooperatively and form partnerships with local judicial districts, attorneys, and children and youth impacted by the child welfare and juvenile justice system.
- ➔ Develop measurement instruments to assess and document the effectiveness of various models of representation.

OCR began operating in 2001 and has been in operation since. OCR became a permanent independent state agency in 2010 when its legislative sunset clause was removed. Over the past 24 years, OCR has worked diligently to fulfill these mandates and improve the quality of legal services and representation of children and youth in Colorado.

OCR advocates on a state-wide basis regarding issues that impact children and youth and the various practice areas that OCR oversees, through extensive committee work, taskforce appointments, the Court Improvement Program, and legislative and administrative advocacy. OCR serves as a resource to legislators by providing subject matter expertise and nonpartisan legal research concerning children, youth, child welfare, and juvenile justice issues. OCR welcomes questions from legislators regarding this report or specific issues concerning children, youth, or attorneys in your community. OCR has a [staff attorney liaison](#) for every judicial district in the state, or the Staff Attorney and Legislative Liaison is available to assist you or your staff.

Attorney Services Provided by OCR

OCR oversees approximately 250 attorneys who serve as GALs, CFY, or Child’s Legal Representatives (“CLR”). These attorneys span the entire state, representing children and youth (or their best interests) in all 23 judicial districts. In FY25, OCR attorneys had open appointments for 15,011 children and youth in Colorado across all case types.

“100% absolutely. She was pivotal in expressing my daughter's thoughts and concerns. and did so very eloquently if I may say.”

- Parent feedback about an OCR attorney

The attorneys for each Judicial District can be found on the updated [Appointment lists](#) posted on the OCR's website. These public interest attorneys are predominately solo practitioners or small business owners who have dedicated some or all of their legal practice to serve children and youth in these cases. A GAL or CFY is appointed by the court for every child or youth who is a party in a dependency and neglect ("D&N") or Foster Youth Transition Program case ("FYTP") as mandated in C.R.S. §19-1-111, §19-3-203, and §19-7-308. OCR is responsible for oversight and payment for these appointments, including any applicable appeal. This is not the totality of OCR responsibility as OCR is responsible for 11 distinct case types. Mandatory appointments that are the responsibility of the OCR include:

| CASE TYPE | OCR RESPONSIBILITY |
|---|---|
| Dependency & Neglect | All GAL and CFY appointments. |
| Foster Youth in Transition Program (FYTP) | All CFY assignments or appointments. |
| Underage Party seeking a Marriage License | All GAL appointments (GAL appointed for all youth 16-17 seeking a marriage license). |
| Juvenile Delinquency – detained youth only | All GAL appointments for youth who are detained (this appointment is limited to the time of detention and further appointment is guided by §19-1-111) |

The court has *discretion* to appoint an OCR attorney in the following proceedings and OCR is responsible for those appointments as follows:

| Case Type | OCR Responsibility |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Delinquency & Direct File | All GAL appointments. |
| Truancy | All GAL appointments. |
| Paternity & Support | GAL appointments where at least one party ordered to be responsible for the costs is indigent. |
| Probate | GAL appointments where at least one party ordered to be responsible for the costs is indigent. |
| Adoption & Relinquishment | GAL appointments where at least one party ordered to be responsible for the costs is indigent. <i>(Note: some CFY appointments are mandated, when the CFY represents the youth in a companion D&N case).</i> |
| Mental Health | All GAL appointments. |
| Victim Witness | All GAL appointments. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Domestic Relations | Child's Legal Representative ("CLR") appointments when one or both parties are indigent. |
| D&N GAL for a minor parent | All GAL appointments. |
| D&N/FYTP GAL for a youth 12+ | All GAL appointments. A GAL may be appointed, when necessary, due to the youth's diminished capacity. |

In addition, OCR may be responsible for appointments in other proceedings deemed necessary by the court.

Attorney Roles

Each proceeding has its own statutory roles and responsibilities. While the statutory responsibilities and practice requirements vary by appointment type, the overall role of the attorney as the independent advocate for the child's interests remains consistent. Regardless of role, all OCR attorneys must conduct a robust, independent, ongoing investigation and provide competent, diligent, and effective legal representation consistent with their responsibilities under the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct for Attorneys and Chief Justice Directive 04-06.

| | <i>Guardian Ad Litem</i> | <i>Counsel for Youth</i> | <i>Child's Legal Representative</i> |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Independent Investigation</i> | Required | Required | Required |
| <i>Advocate for</i> | What the attorney determines is in the best interests of the child after an independent investigation and consulting with the child about their wishes. | The youth's position after an independent investigation and counseling the youth. | What the attorney determines is in the best interests of the child after an independent investigation and consulting with the child about their wishes. |
| <i>Professional Duties flow to</i> | The best interests of the child/youth. | The youth client. | The best interests of the child/youth. |
| <i>Case types</i> | D&N (11 or younger), probate, juvenile delinquency, truancy, mental health, underage marriage, D&N for youth 12 & older when necessary, because of diminished capacity. | D&N (12 or older), Foster youth in Transition Program (FYTP). | Domestic Relations |

Attorneys that contract with OCR (“OCR Attorneys”) are held to high practice standards, set forth in Chief Justice Directive 04-06 (“CJD 04-06”). These attorneys are well-trained, skilled litigators with specialized knowledge of child welfare and juvenile law. The legal advocacy provided by OCR attorneys plays a critical role in protecting children and youth rights, promoting the child’s or youth’s safety and well-being, and ensures these children and youth have a voice throughout their legal proceedings.

OCR Performance Plan Goals for FY25

Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

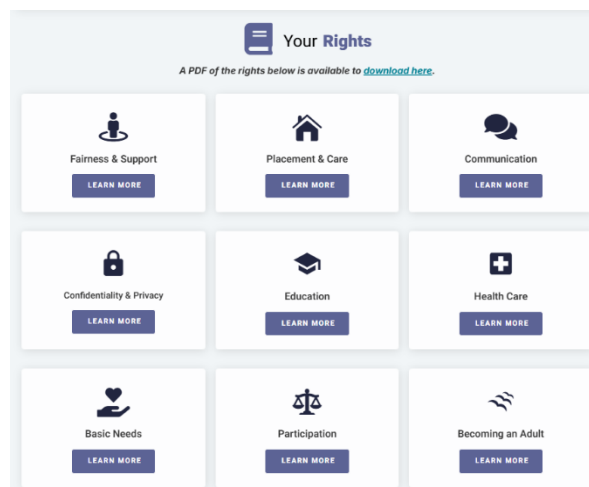
OCR will implement recent legislative changes establishing rights for children and youth in OCR cases to ensure that children and youth understand their rights and have attorneys who consistently engage in effective advocacy to seek equitable outcomes and protect and advance their rights. While implementation of legislation is part of OCR’s ongoing efforts each year, the recent volume of new legislation impacting OCR case types has amplified OCR’s need to invest additional resources, focus, and time, raising it to a Wildly Important Goal for FY25.

Other Performance Goals

- Provide children and youth a voice in the Colorado legal system through effective and efficient attorney services and advocacy.
- Optimize efficiencies in OCR oversight and billing.
- Ensure attorneys and case consultants remain current in state and federal law and regulations, social science research, best practices in diversity and inclusion, and evidence-based services.

Engaging and Empowering Youth

OCR’s Engaging and Empowering Youth programming continued throughout FY25, and OCR conducted 9 youth survey events and collected 139 youth surveys. Additionally, OCR gathered youth feedback through 40 youth reference interviews about GALs/CFY. OCR created the Foster Youth Bill of Rights Youth Page on the OCR’s website and worked with lived experts to create the required Foster Youth Bill of Rights Notice.



LEAP

In its fourth year, LEAP consisted of 10 members who once again contributed to practice improvements and provided insightful guidance to OCR, community partners, and practicing attorneys. OCR’s Youth Engagement Attorney works alongside LEAP members throughout the

year and helps facilitate membership and meetings. These young people with lived experience continue to enhance programming, training, and policy and in FY25 LEAP members:

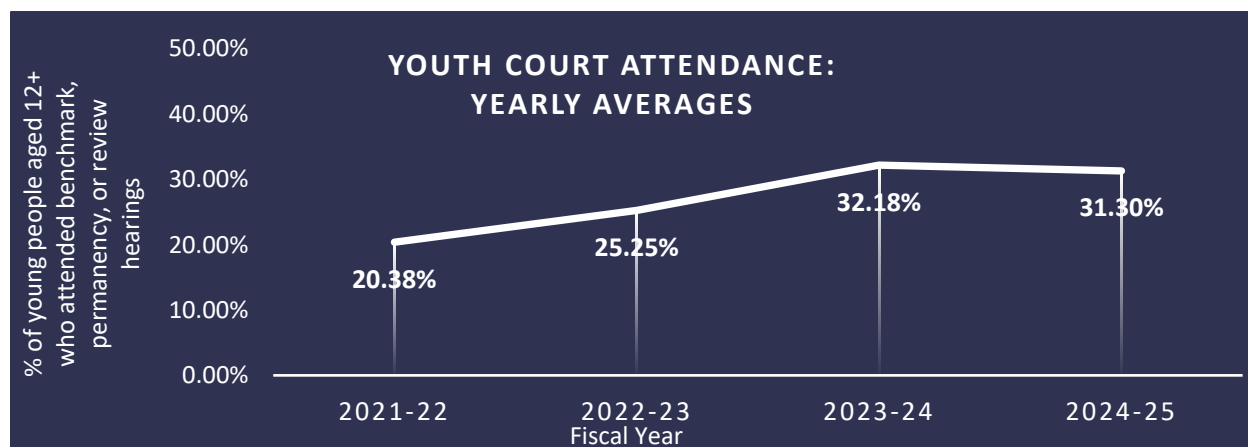
- Trained new GALs, CFY, and CCs at OCR's Core Competencies II.
- Trained GALs, CFY, CCs, and community partners about the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.
- Drafted the Foster Youth Bill of Rights notice form.
- Attended and/or trained at OCR's fall conference.
- Trained at Colorado's Child Welfare Convening.
- Trained young people about their rights.
- Participated in youth events with youth and interested parties from Japan.
- Facilitated youth events.
- Provided input on pending legislation.
- Testified on legislation related to placement and DYS.
- Worked on CDHS regulations and forms related to notice of rights and remedies related to child welfare assessments.
- Revised applications and bylaws for LEAP in FY26.

"I do trust [my attorney] because she has my back when it comes to stuff with like the case like I remember we had a court one time and she was the only person I trusted or wanted to talk to cause I knew she would have my back with it."

- Youth feedback about an OCR attorney

Youth in Court

For years, OCR has worked to increase youth participation in court through training, resource creation, data sharing, and myth-busting. OCR continues to run and disseminate reports for judicial districts and train attorneys, judicial officers, and other community partners on this topic. OCR's youth in court efforts were bolstered in 2023 when all children and youth were given the right to attend and fully participate in their D&N proceedings through HB22-1038. This right was clarified in HB24-1017, with the foster youth bill of rights, and cemented with the adoption of an updated Rule of Juvenile Procedure 4.4 (effective July 1, 2025). This new rule requires courts to inquire whether a child or youth who is not present at a D&N hearing wished to attend, whether that child or youth had the means to attend, and what barriers (if any) prevented the child or youth from attending. OCR remains committed to this important metric and hopes these changes will have a positive impact state-wide.



Oversight and Evaluation to Ensure Effective Attorney Services

OCR attorneys must comply with the professional standards required of all attorneys and are also held to high practice standards specific to this area of practice. Each year, OCR attorneys are evaluated using data related to compliance with those standards. CJD 04-06 limits full-time GAL/CFY to 100 cases or less to ensure attorneys have the capacity to effectively represent their client. OCR's comprehensive evaluation strategy consists of:

- Annual verification process
- Tri-annual renewal process
- New attorney interviews
- Ongoing assessment, periodic reviews, and risk-based sampling of attorney activity

Each year, attorneys contracting with OCR must disclose disciplinary history, verify fulfillment of OCR training requirements, and verify malpractice insurance requirements. Every three years, the OCR requires attorneys to undergo a more involved contract renewal process that includes analysis of additional qualitative data sources. This three-year renewal process is staggered so that one-third of attorneys undergo renewal each year. The annual verification and tri-annual review process requires a review of the following data sources (those in bold only apply to the tri-annual renewal process):

- D&N Initial 30-day Visit Report
- Attorney Discipline Report
- Judicial Officer Stakeholder Survey Report
- Training Verification Form
- Malpractice Insurance Form
- Outstanding Issues Form
- **Court Observation Summary**
- **Case Reference Summary**
- **Writing Sample**
- **One-on-One Interview**
- **Youth Contact Report**
- **Youth in Court Report**
- **Youth Surveys**

Each attorney is reviewed by an OCR staff attorney who assesses any discrepancies between the attorney's data and the established benchmarks. Attorneys who fall outside of the benchmarks are staffed by the OCR to determine what action is necessary. This process promotes consistency and transparency in OCR's contract decisions. In FY25, OCR processed 229 verification and renewal applications and received 36 additional new applications. Additionally, OCR received and reviewed 445 Judicial Officer Surveys, interviewed 137 case references, and conducted 156 court

observations. OCR's Information Systems team continues to develop and refine reports to support efficient, standardized, and streamlined processes for reviewing the extensive data.

Information Systems

OCR's Information Systems (IS) team is focused on maximizing the effectiveness and productivity of the agency by building flexible, highly responsive data and technology solutions at minimal time and financial cost. In-house access to this support remains a significant factor in OCR's ability to operate at high efficiency, provide robust oversight, respond to contractor and legal team needs, and meet emerging demands while remaining administratively lean. Effective oversight depends on timely, reliable information that only robust and trustworthy data systems can provide. This is particularly important as OCR serves children and youth – vulnerable individuals who cannot always monitor their attorney's performance or independently raise concerns.

"She did an excellent job of understanding me during my time as a foster child. She had known me from when I was a toddler, around 4-5 years old, until I was 17 and got adopted. She supported me through numerous challenges and emotional difficulties, and I was grateful for her assistance."

- Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

The OCR IS team's expertise allows OCR to:

- Automate tasks, increase accuracy, and reduce administrative burden.
- Integrate and analyze large volumes of data from multiple sources to inform efficiency, oversight, budgeting, and policy decisions.
- Quickly create tailored solutions for emerging needs and continually improve existing tools to match OCR's exact workflows and strategic goals.

CARES Case Management and Billing System

OCR's custom, purpose-built online case management and billing system ("CARES") supports OCR attorneys, delivers real-time budget analysis and projections, and generates tailored reports necessary for oversight and accountability.

| CARES Snapshot (FY25): | |
|---|----------------|
| Active Users | ~560 |
| Activities logged by attorneys, CCs, and their staff | 716,933 |
| Case management notes entered | 366,687 |
| Attachments uploaded | 24,140 |
| Invoices generated/exported for state payment | 2,784 |
| Line items automatically compiled for review in above invoices | 874,937 |
| Help Center views (# of times an article was read) | 4,977 |

CARES 2 has been in use since 2018, reaching the end of its planned service life. In FY25, OCR's IS team began a comprehensive redevelopment of CARES, laying the groundwork for a modernized CARES 3 platform designed with architecture and functionality intended to support a decade of use. The IS team led the effort which included:

- Designing and documenting comprehensive logic and user experience, refined into almost 1,500 functional requirements supported by detailed data model and interface mockups.
- Evaluating a broad set of proposals and presentations through a structured review process.
- Selecting a development partner with proven technical expertise and an efficient, collaborative approach.

The RFP drew consistent feedback from presenting vendors that OCR's materials were among the clearest and most thorough they had worked with, enabling informative demonstrations and precise scoping. With this milestone reached, OCR enters FY26 ready to begin the building of CARES 3, scheduled to go live during this fiscal year.

Development will center on scalability, maintainability, and performance while preserving the proven, precisely focused business logic and workflows that support OCR's mission. CARES 3 will deliver a faster, more intuitive experience for users, with a clearer interface that makes it easier to track completed work, deadlines, and case needs. By streamlining daily tasks and strengthening underlying data, attorneys and legal teams can devote more time to representing youth rather than navigating administrative processes. This modernization will enhance accountability and further reduce administrative burden.

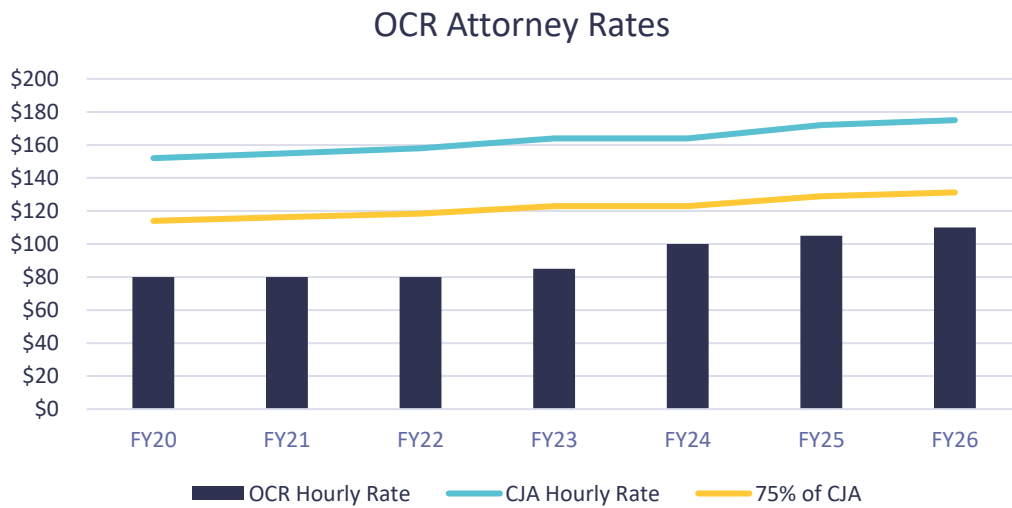
"She was very personal with me. She didn't make it sound like it was just her job. She put her own perspective on it. She listened to me very thoroughly. I felt very supported and in control of my own situation."

- Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

Fair and Reasonable Compensation

OCR is statutorily mandated, in C.R.S. 13-91-105, to establish fair and realistic rates of compensation to enhance the legal representation of children. Attorney rates are impacted by C.R.S. 21-2-105 (2)(b), and as of July 1, 2025, the OCR attorney rate is \$110/hour.

C.R.S. 21-2-105 requires annual increases until the attorney rate reaches at least 75% of the rate set pursuant to the Federal "Criminal Justice Act Revision of 1986" ("CJA"), which sets attorney rates for indigent representation in federal court. As of July 1, 2025, the CJA rate for non-capitol cases is \$175/hour and OCR attorney rates are currently at 63% of the CJA rate (an increase of 2% points from last year). Please note, this only reflects the attorney rate and not the rates of non-attorney members of the legal team:



Recruitment and Retention

OCR’s efforts to attain a more industry aligned compensation rate addressed above are a vital piece of the agency’s recruitment and retention strategy. Outside of compensation, the OCR administers an Attorney Satisfaction Survey to all contract attorneys for the year. OCR strives to be responsive to the feedback from these surveys as part of its retention strategy. In FY25, OCR received 131 Attorney Satisfaction Surveys covering each Judicial District. OCR acted in a variety of ways that were responsive to the results of the survey. For example, OCR:

- Changed communication strategies, with weekly announcements targeted to attorneys.
- Incorporated feedback into CARES 3 planning.
- Continued case staffings due to positive feedback.
- Prioritized training topics in response to survey results.
- Is undertaking an effort to comprehensively update and streamline OCR’s Litigation Toolkit.

OCR assigns staff attorneys to be liaisons with specific judicial districts each year. This ensures that each district has a contact who can provide support, training, and who is available to discuss issues specific to the district. The staff attorney liaison assesses the needs of each district by collaborating with judicial officers, meeting with attorneys, and reviewing judicial district filing statistics and OCR appointment data. These assessments ensure attorneys who contract with the OCR are not overwhelmed by their caseloads and can financially sustain a practice. OCR’s EDIJ attorney does additional work to

“I do, she listened very well to what the child wanted and even restructured in the agreement based on the child's wants and needs. She enjoyed talking to her and just being listened to.”

- Parent feedback about an OCR Attorney

recruit and retain a diverse pool of attorneys, including outreach to specialty bar associations, and community engagement.

Additionally, OCR hosts student interns each semester to increase awareness and education about this specialized field of legal practice and to establish relationships with law schools in Colorado, as well as schools around the nation. Each year, OCR participates in the CU/DU School of Law Public Interest Career Fair and seeks additional opportunities to engage with local law schools.

Attorney Supports

OCR provides a variety of litigation support to enhance attorney efficiency and keep attorneys and CCs current in relevant subject matter areas. Many of these supports require substantial staff time to create and maintain, and they include:

- **Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID)** – a comprehensive advocacy guide published by the OCR in 2012, rewritten in 2018 and 2025, and updated annually to address comprehensive legal and practice developments, including the changes to the legal model through HB22-1038, family time, and the Foster Youth in Transition Program. This impressive guide covers 8 hearing specific chapters and 39 factsheets. It also includes practice tips, supporting citations to rule and statute, and case law. The expansive resource is updated annually and made available electronically around January of each year, with a new plan to provide an updated print version on an annual basis.
- **Litigation Toolkit** – contains pleadings, social science resources, and practice tools maintained throughout the year and periodically updated to reflect legal and practice developments. Keeping this resource up to date and relevant requires year-round work and attention.
- **Litigation Support List** – attorneys with subject matter expertise who are approved to consult on cases and assist in high-quality legal representation.
- **Appellate Certification Program** – attorneys must complete OCR’s appellate certification program to ensure they are qualified to represent a child or youth on appeals in their cases. In addition, OCR has certified select attorneys who are available to consult with case-carrying attorneys about potential appellate matters and handle cases state-wide on appeals for attorneys who are not certified.
- **Direct File and Transfer List** – attorneys with experience and dedication to this practice area are identified to take these specialized cases or consult with other attorneys as needed.
- **Second Chair List** – litigation support through a list of experienced attorneys available to second chair specified hearings.
- **Mentoring Program** – each OCR contract attorney is assigned a district-specific mentor for the first year of their contract.
- **OCR Listserv** - membership is required for OCR contractors, and the listserv provides an excellent forum to disseminate and discuss difficult case issues, trends, case law or legislative

updates, new case processes, and recent developments. In FY25, OCR attorneys sent over 900 emails via the listserv.

- **Quarterly Newsletters** - provides up-to-date information on case law updates, legislative updates, training announcements, attorney shout-outs, and more.
- **Westlaw** – OCR provides this comprehensive legal research tool to every OCR contract attorney.
- **Case Staffings** – an online opportunity for attorneys to develop community and seek feedback on case specific issues with other practitioners as well as OCR staff. Staffings are held on a regular basis for D&N, JD, and other case type practitioners.

Appellate Certification Program

In addition to extensive trial court representation, OCR attorneys are also responsible for ensuring children and youth are represented on appeal. OCR launched the Appellate Certification Program in 2023 to support high quality appellate representation for children and youth. OCR now requires any attorney representing a child or youth in an appeal to have completed OCR's appellate certification program and in FY25 there are 44 Certified Level I appellate attorneys contracting with OCR. In addition, 7 select attorneys are

"Just the fact that she's helped me through the entire process, she's made me a way better person than when I was when I first, what's the word.. presented... anyway, she made me a way better person. I know that this is what those programs are trying to do, but it's way better than it would be without her in it."

- Youth feedback about an OCR attorney

qualified as Level II appellate attorneys with even deeper expertise. Level II attorneys are available to consult with case-carrying attorneys about potential appellate matters and handle cases on appeal for attorneys who are not certified or who request an appellate specialist. OCR's Appellate and Litigation Support Attorney supports the appellate team and hosts monthly meetings for Level II certified attorneys and quarterly meetings for Level I certified attorneys.

OCR Amicus Work in FY25

OCR filed an amicus brief in a Rule 21 matter decided by the Colorado Supreme Court, *People in the interest of R.M.P.*, 2025CO34 (Colo., June 2, 2025). This case significantly impacts the rights of youth and implicates recent legislative reforms around counsel for youth, youth party status, and recognition of the importance of procedural due process for youth that are system involved. The Colorado Supreme Court ultimately decided that the government (through the county department of human services (DHS)) has unilateral authority related to prosecuting a Dependency and Neglect (D&N) petition. In doing so, the Court overturned long standing precedent that provided, once DHS files a petition, that a guardian ad litem for the child may object and request a hearing on the merits. The result in this case flags a need to be vigilant in ensuring procedural protections given by the general assembly, and OCR will continue to engage in advocacy as needed to protect the rights of children and youth.

Earlier in the fiscal year, OCR also filed an amicus brief in *People in the Interest of B.C.B.*, 2025CO28 (Colo. May. 27, 2025). In this case the Supreme Court interpreted a 2020 legislative change to Colorado Revised Statute 19-3-102 (1)(g) regarding the definition of a dependent and neglected child due to prenatal alcohol or substance exposure. The Court adopted a two-prong approach ensuring children born affected by prenatal alcohol or substance exposure receive a holistic assessment as to whether that exposure threatens the child’s health or welfare.

Direct File and Transfer List

In FY25, OCR certified a list of attorneys as direct file and transfer specialists. These attorneys have experience in this complex case type, demonstrate a commitment to a practice that affirms youth rights, were required to participate in a 1-hour video training course, and commit to attending 6 hours of CLE related to youth justice practice. This list will be updated annually, and specialists will work closely with OCR’s Youth Justice Attorney.

Case Consultant (CC) Program

Multidisciplinary law practice is a well-accepted best practice that OCR is working to infuse throughout the state. OCR billing policies support attorneys who want to hire their own social work professional, referred to as a case consultant (CC), or attorneys may engage the services of an OCR contract CC to work on specific cases and bill OCR directly. The use of CCs allows additional work on cases at a lower hourly rate, provides social science expertise to complement the attorney’s expertise, and can enhance attorney contact with children/youth, independent investigation, and related legal positions. OCR CCs can be one of two levels:

| Case Consultant I | Case Consultant II |
|---|--|
| Licensed in a relevant field plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Masters Degree in a relevant field or + Bachelor’s Degree in a relevant field AND at least 2 years of relevant experience | Licensed as a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) • Professional Counselor (PC) or • Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) |

In FY25, OCR contracted directly with 17 CCs (9 of which are Spanish speaking) who are available state-wide. At the end of FY25 OCR engaged in robust recruitment efforts that have generated a high-quality applicant pool for FY26.

To date, OCR CCs have provided expertise in over 950 cases, covering 19 judicial districts. OCR, in partnership with Colorado State University, conducted research in 2023 regarding the CC program and found that among attorneys, there was a consensus as to the effectiveness of collaboration with social workers. 72.3% of attorneys agreed or strongly agreed that CC presence improved their ability to advocate for clients’ interests and 68% agreed or strongly agreed that CC presence improves client engagement. In 2025, OCR’s El Paso office initiated a study in partnership with Colorado College targeted at examining the efficacy of court ordered therapy. The study, which

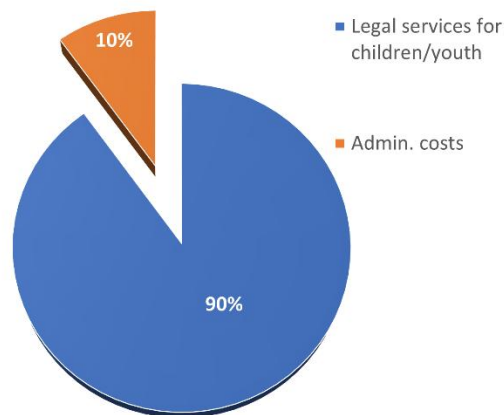
has no cost to OCR, aims to assess whether court ordered therapeutic interventions have been useful to youth clients and their families in the way we assume. Results from the study will be delivered in FY26.

OCR Allocation

OCR strives to be efficient and effective in utilizing its annual appropriation. OCR's budget is driven largely by attorney activity and caseloads. For example, the court-appointed counsel ("CAC") appropriation is driven strictly by the caseload and workload of contractor billing. OCR does not control the number of appointments, as these are made by courts. In contrast, OCR does control non-CAC expenditures and endeavors to ensure these stay within the annual appropriation. In FY25, OCR used 90%

of its expended funds for attorney services (including the CAC line item) and only 10% for administration. OCR expended \$205,013 (including grant funding received by OCR) to provide high-quality and accessible training. The general assembly passed \$2,750,000 through OCR's budget to Colorado CASA for distribution to local CASA programs. In total, OCR used 92% of its appropriation and reverted \$1.1 million to the general fund. Earlier in the fiscal year, OCR reverted \$1.25 million in response to Joint Budget Committee requests and state budgetary needs.

FY 25 Administrative Expenditures



OCR's Operations Team continues to process invoices and pay contractors with great efficiency. In FY25, OCR staff processed 2,773 invoices through CARES and an additional 987 non-CARES payments while averaging 3.9 days from CARES invoice submission to upload in the state financial system for payment.

Title IV-E Funding

OCR is authorized to use IV-E funding to enhance attorney services and utilized \$1,945,382 in FY25 to continue support of multidisciplinary law practice by contracting with additional CCs, reimbursing contract attorneys for their time completing OCR training requirements, providing holistic legal representation on civil matters related to attorneys' appointed cases, and providing enhanced education litigation support.

Civil Legal Services

OCR began work with the Colorado Homeless Legal Project in FY24 to provide collateral legal services on civil matters, delivering holistic legal representation to children and youth involved in D&N and JD cases. In its second year, the program served 44 children and youth with matters in 12 counties, including both metro and rural areas. Legal assistance was provided in the areas of probate, landlord/tenant, domestic relations, protection orders, torts, housing insecurity, and more. The legal successes for these

youth impact the trajectory of their lives and removed barriers to employment and housing, protected a youth from harassment, established a financial conservatorship, and helped a youth continue their higher education. Feedback from attorneys has been overwhelmingly positive and OCR looks forward to continued growth in the coming years.

“Yes, absolutely he was. The one thing I did love about him throughout the whole process he got to know the child and what she wanted and give a good reflection to the judge of her, where she belonged and what was best for her.”

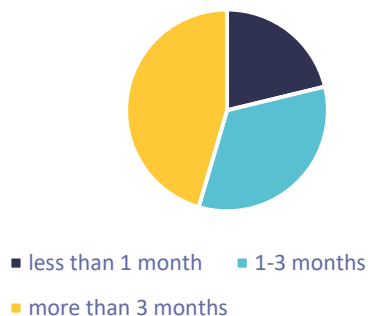
- Caregiver feedback about an OCR Attorney

Educational Proceeding Support

In FY25, OCR launched an enhanced education support program to allow attorneys and members of their legal team to advocate and litigate in collateral education proceedings. Additionally, OCR contracted with an attorney to provide direct education litigation support and consultation to attorneys when needed. That education litigation support attorney provided assistance in 86 matters, from brief technical support to full representation, which covered 12 judicial districts, 14 counties, and 19 school districts (both urban and rural). Matters ranged from school discipline proceedings, special education advocacy, discrimination complaints, and truancy support.

In its first year this program shows great promise with efficient and targeted intervention. Twelve expulsions were immediately rescinded, 6 went to hearing with 4 resulting in the student not being recommended for expulsion. More than 50 hours went to special education meeting support regarding IEPs or 504 plans and of the 11 discrimination complaints filed, 9 resulted in favorable settlement agreement or victories for the client, meaning that the student received increased access to their education, compensatory services, or other support to ensure they received a free appropriate public education pursuant to the IDEA.

Months of Involvement



Accessible State-Wide Training

The General Assembly charged OCR with providing high-quality and accessible training throughout the state, and OCR contract attorneys are required to complete at least 10 hours of OCR-sponsored or approved training, including at least 2 hours of EDIJ specific training. To meet this requirement, OCR has developed a learning and practice environment that infuses EDIJ principles throughout and focuses on ten overarching core competencies as the foundation of high-quality representation:

- Role of Attorney and Legal Team
- Youth Engagement & Empowerment
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice (EDIJ)
- Legal Knowledge (appointed case and related proceedings)
- Social Science Knowledge
- Systems Context
- Skills
- Education
- Wellbeing
- Law Practice Management

"She didn't make me feel like I was looked down on like I was a kid and that kinda made me trust her more. Seeing how she is with my case and all that. She actually cares and has the patience for younger kids."

- Youth Feedback about an OCR Attorney

To support this learning and practice environment, OCR offers periodic staffings by case type (e.g., FYTP, CFY, youth justice, appellate litigation support, CLR, probate) where attendees can assess needs and create a community of shared knowledge and information. In addition to the overarching competencies, OCR focuses on key priorities each fiscal year. These priorities are informed by:

- OCR's WIG and performance goals
- Contractor needs identified by the Attorney Satisfaction Survey and monthly case-type staffings
- LEAP input and recommendations
- New state and federal legal and practice developments

In FY25, the training priorities were:

- Rights for Youth in Foster Care Implementation
- Education
- Case Consultant Competencies

OCR often delivers training when requested by judicial districts, state and national organizations, and other professionals and not all of these qualify for CLE credits. In FY25, OCR provided 93 new CLEs:

- Core Competencies I: Orientation for New Attorneys and Case Consultants
- Core Competencies II: Advanced Training for New Attorneys and Case Consultants
- OCR Annual Fall Conference
- OCR Annual Virtual Spring Conference
- D&N and Youth Justice Case Law & Legislative Update
- New Colorado Discovery Rules CRJP 4.6
- Trial Skills Training: ABA Strategies for Advancing Permanency
- Foster Youth in Transition Program 101: A Comprehensive Overview of Law & Practice
- Educational Advocacy: Preparing for the School Year
- Educational Advocacy: Preparing for the End of the School Year
- Excellence in Youth Defense Conference
- Foster Youth Bill of Rights Community Partner Training
- LGBTQA+ Child Welfare Southwest Convening
- Trust Based Relational Intervention: TBRI in the Courts

Training in the areas of the law covered by OCR attorneys requires a nimble approach as the law is continually evolving and therefore the OCR training program must continually change to remain up-to-date and relevant. At the end of FY25, OCR has a total of 285 current and up-to-date hours of training and CLEs available online for easy accessibility across the state.

Additionally, OCR offers scholarships to state and national conferences to support contractor learning and community building. OCR offered a total of 10 scholarships to attorneys in FY25. OCR has not had access to its offices in the Ralph Carr Judicial Center due to substantial damage to the third floor and has been forced to relocate much of the in-person training to other locations. While this has been difficult and has impacted OCR's training budget, OCR managed to continue providing robust and targeted training throughout the fiscal year.

To further enhance learning opportunities and state-wide accessibility, OCR developed a curriculum for e-learning through on-demand courses. Currently, the OCR has 16 unique on-demand courses, including:

- Indian Child Welfare Act: Quick Guide
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status: Quick Guide
- Appellate Certification Course
- Direct File/Transfer Certification Course
- Core Competencies training topics: sources of law in dependency & neglect cases; educational advocacy, stages of a dependency & neglect case, stages of a juvenile delinquency case
- Foster Youth Bill of Rights Modules, including: Benefits, Youth Transition to Adulthood, Placement, Youth Participation, and Healthcare.

"Nothing really, I just can't add enough good things about her. If I got a call and I knew she was on the case it would add to my willingness to take the young person."

- Caregiver Feedback about an OCR Attorney

CASA Overview and Update

OCR works with Colorado CASA to support Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) as established in 19-1-213. While GALs and CFY are appointed on every case and serve as the child's legal advocate, CASAs are appointed for a portion of children by the court to provide additional information and support. CASA is currently operating in 20 of the 23 judicial districts, and each program operates under a memorandum of understanding between the program and the chief judge of the district. The CASA role and expectations are set out in C.R.S. 19-1-201 et seq. Although each local program is unique, similarities do exist. CASA volunteers must meet minimum requirements, pass background checks, and successfully complete a mandatory 30- or 40-hour training program based on the curriculum created by the National CASA Association. Local CASA programs also require additional training for volunteers. Most CASA/GAL volunteers concentrate their service on one case at a time, and typically a volunteer must commit to a minimum 18 months of service (though many volunteers serve throughout the life of a case - and cases now average 24 months). CASA volunteers monitor and increase support to counter the effect of trauma and increase children's resilience, education success, health and overall well-being. They focus on permanency, safety, education, health, development, relationships, extracurricular activities, and transition to adulthood. While GALs and CASA volunteers generally work collaboratively and are each required to provide independent information to the court, their roles differ in significant ways. A GAL is a licensed attorney and is an active party in all litigation related to the best interests of the child; volunteer advocates are non-attorney advocates who provide written reports to the court and parties, establish supportive relationships with children, youth, parents, kin, placements, and educators. OCR supports Colorado CASA by serving as the pass-through agency for general fund dollars and providing technical support and consultation regarding IV-E reimbursement. In FY25, 1,688 citizens volunteered as CASAs in 1,878 D&N cases, serving 3,236 children and youth.

Conclusion

OCR continues to be proud of the amazing staff, members of LEAP, contract attorneys, and case consultants that provide high quality legal representation to children and youth across the state. The fight for youth, their voice, and their rights, is one that OCR is dedicating to preserving and enhancing for years to come.

"[CFY] - met her at 14 and had her until I was 21...I was in the foster youth transition program. She made me feel heard, when I had issues she was always there and what I wanted. She seems to care very much and I became close with her."

– Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

Appendix A

OCR Committee Work

OCR's mission, vision, and values inform the work of staff as they participate in a wide variety of committees, taskforces, and working groups. This work is essential to successfully advocating for children and youth in state-level policy and administration. The following is the list of OCR committee involvement.

Colorado Supreme Court Standing Committee on Family Issues: This committee was established by the Supreme Court as a result of the recommendations of the Colorado Supreme Court Commission on Families. OCR's Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney serves on this committee.

Child Focused Innovative Practices Subcommittee: This subcommittee is charged with exploring innovative ways to serve Colorado's children in domestic relations and other court cases in Colorado. OCR's Training Director serves on this committee.

Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

Children's Justice Act Task Force: Reviews and evaluates state investigative, administrative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities, and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal. The taskforce makes policy and training recommendations to child welfare agencies and the judiciary and makes recommendations regarding the distribution of federal CJA funds. OCR's Training Director serves on this task force.

Colorado Youth Detention Continuum Advisory Board (CYDC): CYDC is implemented locally within each of Colorado's 22 Judicial Districts. The Advisory Board is responsible for developing an allocation formula and allocating funds from the General Assembly for these programs. In addition, this group is examining the services and placements necessary to ensure ongoing implementation of SB71 and the detention bed cap. OCR's Youth Justice Attorney is a member.

Colorado Youth Leadership Network (COYLN): Leaders of groups who work with young people who have been through the child welfare and/or delinquency system(s), share and coordinate efforts of their groups, and plan each year's Youth Awareness Week, which emphasizes positive youth voice, celebrates the influence youth have in our state and local communities, and recognizes the organizations/advocates who collaborate with Colorado youth and help guide them toward positive life choices and stability. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney is a member.

Kinship Foster Care Certification Task Group: This group continues to draft recommended revisions to CDHS regulations related to the requirements for kinship caretakers of Colorado children/youth placed through child welfare cases. OCR's Deputy Director is participating.

Training Steering Committee: The Training Steering Committee is the decision-making body for the Division of Child Welfare Training System Academy. The Steering Committee provides continuous evaluation of the training program, reviews the training needs of the state, provides direction for standardized training, creates and integrates statutes, policies, and practices into state-wide training. OCR's Training Director serves on this committee.

Permanency Task Group: A subcommittee of the Child Welfare Sub-Pac working on various permanency related issues including identifying barriers to permanency, possible solutions and

financial needs, and focusing on disrupted/dissolving of adoptions. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney serves on this committee.

DYS State Policy Review Committee: A DYS-assembled committee that allows stakeholders to discuss pending DYS policies and changes. As a member, OCR's Youth Justice Attorney reviews these policies and provides input on how policies may impact the best interests of youth in facilities.

Statutory/Rules Review Group: A multi-agency group that looks at necessary statutory and rule changes in child welfare. OCR's Deputy Director participates in this group.

CDHS Chafee Quarterly: The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee program, formerly the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program) was created after the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 (Public Law 106-169). The program provides assistance to youth currently and formerly in foster care to successfully transition to adulthood by providing activities and programs such as education, employment, financial management, housing, emotional support, and connections to supportive adults. During the CDHS Chafee Quarterly Meetings, personnel from CDHS and county departments discuss the Chafee Program and other similar programs and resources available to older Colorado youth. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney attends.

SB23-039 Workgroup: This is a time-limited workgroup that will work to develop regulations to facilitate contact and communication between children in D&N cases and parents who are incarcerated in Colorado facilities. OCR's Deputy Director serves as a member of this workgroup.

Domestic Violence Flags Workgroup: This workgroup is tasked with developing and implementing a consistent screening process for a county department to follow, when possible, in responding to a report or inquiry to the hotline system. The state department is required to develop and implement a disclosure procedure that notifies callers to the hotline system that calls are recorded. OCR's Case Consultant Coordinator is participating in this workgroup.

Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee: This committee brings people with lived experience, child welfare experts, legislators, state agencies, and community members together to transform the child welfare system into a valuable resource that families would choose to utilize. OCR's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice Staff Attorney is a member of the steering committee. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney participates in the recruitment and retention subcommittee.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Rule Writing Group: This time-limited workgroup is meeting to update Colorado Code of Regulations, 2509-4, 7.309, based on the legislature's passage of HB 25-1204, which codified the federal ICWA of 1978 into Colorado statute and expanded protections for Native American children, families, and tribes involved in child custody proceedings. OCR's Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney participates in this workgroup.

Colorado Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 4: (formerly called the Program Improvement Plan Implementation Team). This collaborative effort includes stakeholders such as the Colorado Department of Human Services and county partners, working to ensure compliance with federal child welfare requirements. The team meets monthly to develop plans and prepare

Colorado for this review. OCR's Deputy Director and the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice Staff Attorney participate on this team.

Colorado Child Fatality Prevention Review Team: The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's state-wide multidisciplinary team examines every child death in Colorado. The committee is charged with compiling statistical analysis, trends, and recommendations to reduce child fatalities. OCR's Executive Director serves on this committee.

Court Improvement Program (CIP): The CIP focuses on improving the justice system for children, especially children in dependency and neglect cases. Specifically, the CIP oversees the federal grant given to each state that is to be utilized to improve the Dependency Court System and oversees the DANSR cross-systems collaboration. **Best Practices CIP Taskforce** comprises 10 leaders in child welfare, including OCR's Deputy Director, who serves as an executive member. OCR's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice Staff Attorney serves as a non-executive member.

OCR staff also serve on the following CIP groups:

Best Practice Court Team & Family Treatment Drug Court Convening Planning Committee: A multidisciplinary committee convened by the State Court Administrator's Office for the purpose of planning the annual BPCT/FTDC Convening for judicial district teams. OCR's Training Director serves on this subcommittee.

Colorado Dependency & Neglect Judicial Institute Planning Committee: A multidisciplinary committee convened by the State Court Administrator's Office and Dean of the Institute for the purpose of planning the annual D&N Judicial Institute for judicial officers in dependency court. OCR's Training Director serves on this committee.

Jefferson County Joint DANSR/FIT Court Advisory Committee: Jefferson County has been selected as a grant recipient of a Prevention and Family Recovery grant, an initiative undertaken by Children and Families Futures to work with established family treatment courts to integrate and institutionalize evidence-based services into their larger systems of care. OCR's Youth Justice Attorney serves on the advisory committee.

Appellate Best Practices Team: The Appellate Best Practices Team is a group of individuals involved in child welfare appellate cases who meet to identify and support best practices in appellate child welfare cases, recognizing that appeals in such cases impact juvenile courts, practitioners, parents, families, and stakeholders throughout Colorado. OCR's Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney is a member of the team.

Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Council: The Colorado Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Council is appointed by the Governor as the State Advisory Group pursuant to the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and is charged under the Act to advise and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on juvenile justice issues. The Council reviews and approves applications for federal grant funding through the JJDP Act, monitors and evaluates projects funded, and oversees compliance with the core requirements of the JJDP Act. OCR's Youth Justice Attorney is appointed to the Council.

Code Review Committee: The committee is reviewing Article 2 of Title 19 to promote improvements to, increasing the ease of use and clarity of laws regarding juvenile justice, ensuring the Code complies, or is consistent, with current research and evidence-based policies and practices. OCR's Youth Justice Attorney serves on this committee.

Colorado CASA Government Relations Committee: OCR Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is a member of the CASA Government Relations Committee.

Colorado Bar Association

Juvenile Law Section (JLS): The JLS “[p]rovides an organization available for all lawyers whose practice brings them in contact with matters affecting young people. Though a major focus concerns practice under the Children's Code, the committee is also concerned with relevant aspects of education law, domestic relations, agency/administrative law, and disability law.” Various OCR staff are members and OCR Deputy Director is a co-editor for the Juvenile Law section of the Colorado Lawyer.

Colorado Supreme Court Rules of Juvenile Procedure Committee: The Committee's purpose is to periodically review, correct, update, and improve the Colorado Rules of Juvenile Procedure. The Committee is chaired by the Honorable Craig R. Welling of the Colorado Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court Liaison to the Committee is Justice Richard L. Gabriel. OCR's Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney is a member of this committee and serves on the following subcommittees: Drafting and Indian Child Welfare Act.

Colorado Judicial Department Child Welfare Appeals Workgroup: Established pursuant to 19-1-109(3), this committee considers necessary changes to practices, rules, and statutes in order to ensure that appeals in D&N cases are resolved within six months of filing. OCR's Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney serves on this workgroup and participates in the following subcommittees: Practitioners, Timelines to Permanency, Records, and Rule 3.4.

Legislative Committees: Legislation passed by the General Assembly requires implementation by the Executive and Judicial Branches. OCR staff participate in multidisciplinary committees in order to affect the General Assembly's intent.

Treatment of Persons with Mental Health Disorders in the Criminal Justice System Taskforce (reauthorized pursuant to SB14-021): Directed to examine the identification, diagnosis, and treatment of persons with mental illness who are involved in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, including the examination of liability, safety and cost as they related to those issues. OCR's Youth Justice Attorney serves as a member of the taskforce.

Human Trafficking Council (HB 14-1273): The purpose of the council is to bring together leadership across various levels of government and the community in a collaborative coalition to help combat human trafficking. The Council is expected to improve comprehensive services for victims and survivors of human trafficking, assist in the successful prosecution of human traffickers, and enhance human trafficking prevention efforts in Colorado. OCR's Executive Director is a member of the council.

Substance Abuse Trend and Response Taskforce (SB 13-244): In 2013, the General Assembly reauthorized the Colorado State Methamphetamine Taskforce under the name “Substance Abuse Trend and Response Taskforce” with representatives of state government, local governments, and the private sector, including legislators, child advocates, public health officials, drug treatment providers, child welfare workers, law enforcement officers, judges, and prosecutors. OCR's Case Consultant Coordinator is a member of the taskforce.

Timothy Montoya Taskforce to Prevent Youth from Running from Out-of-Home Placement (HB22-1375): The taskforce will meet over two years to analyze the root causes of why children

run away from out-of-home placement; develop a consistent, prompt, and effective response to recovering missing children and to address the safety and well-being of a child upon a child's return to out-of-home placement. OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is an appointed member of the taskforce.

Mandatory Reporting Taskforce (HB22-1240): The taskforce will analyze the effectiveness of and issues with the law requiring individuals from specific professions to report suspected child abuse to authorities. OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is an appointed member of the taskforce.

Safe Babies State Advisory Group (SAG): SAG helps guide the statewide expansion of Colorado's Safe Babies approach, supports Safe Babies implementation fidelity, and addresses disparities that impact both the Safe Babies approach and the population that it serves. OCR's Executive Director participates in the advisory group.

Celebration of Educational Excellence (CEEX): Recognizes young people involved in foster care or youth services who graduated from high school, received a GED, or obtained a college degree each year. Graduates can attend a resource fair to connect with organizations that can support their future success. OCR's Youth Empowerment attorney serves on the CEEX planning committee.

Coalition for Reducing Racial & Ethnic Disparities (CRRED): The mission of CRRED is to ensure fair and equal justice for all juveniles by overseeing policies that address social, cultural, economic, and educational roots of the disproportionate representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system. OCR's Case Consultant Coordinator is a member.

Advisory Council for Homeless Youth (ACHY): This multidisciplinary council shares resources and information relevant to homeless youth and plans Colorado's Homeless Youth Awareness Month. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney attends meetings.

Systemic Family Engagement/Steering Committee: This multidisciplinary committee aims to re-imagine the child welfare system for the next seven generations, based largely on the input from children/youth and families who have experienced the system. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney is a member.

Family Impact Project: A project to develop a pilot program based on family-centered holistic support and healing. The program aims to provide comprehensive assistance through customized impact plans and a wraparound community of care that will prevent family separation. OCR's Staff Attorney and Legislative Liaison participates in several FIP workgroups.

American Bar Association Section of Litigation Children's Rights Litigation Committee – Children's Lawyers Connect: This strategy group monitors developments impacting children's right to counsel and works to improve access to justice, engage pro bono lawyers, and improve outcomes for all children who have contact with the legal system. OCR's Deputy Director is a committee member.

The Family Justice Initiative: A national collaborative who share a common goal: to increase access to high-quality legal representation for children and parents in child welfare cases. It is led by the ABA Center on Children and the Law, the Children's Law Center of California, and the Washington State Office of Public Defense. OCR's Deputy Director is participating in the initiative.

FJI Quality Workgroup: The Family Justice Quality Workgroup created the Antiracist Lawyering Toolkit (ARL), a comprehensive resource for high-quality legal representation. Developed by a cross-disciplinary team, it offers practical tools like sample motions and briefs, language and

framing guides, bias awareness questions, and a resource for reframing court interactions. The Workgroup is now exploring ways to promote ARL. OCR's CC Coordinator and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice Staff Attorney participate in the workgroup.

National Association of Child Counsel (NACC) State Coordinator: NACC established a state coordinator program to expand outreach and localized support efforts to a growing network of child welfare attorneys. OCR's Staff Attorney & Legislative Liaison serves as the Colorado state coordinator.

Children's Law Office Project (CLOP): Designed to improve the delivery of legal services to children in abuse and neglect cases through improved child law office operation and management. OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison participates.