



COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE

SMART Act Hearings

January 22, 2026

OCR 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.

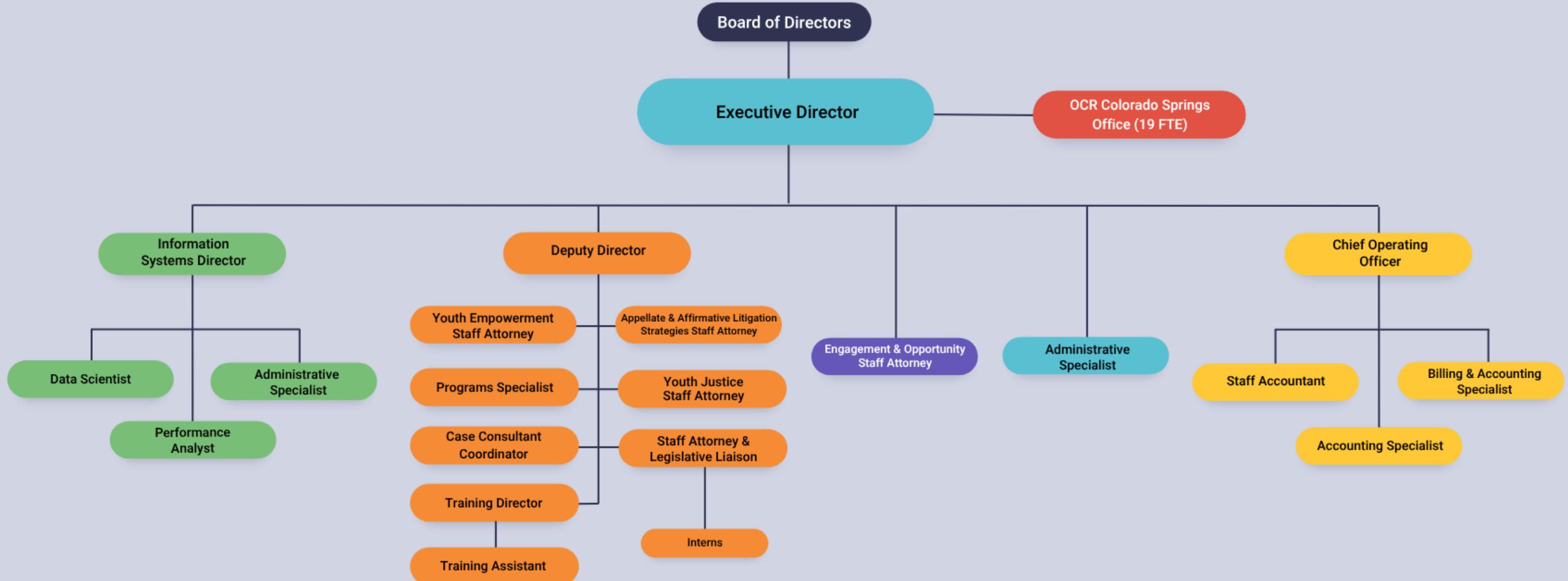
Efficiency

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

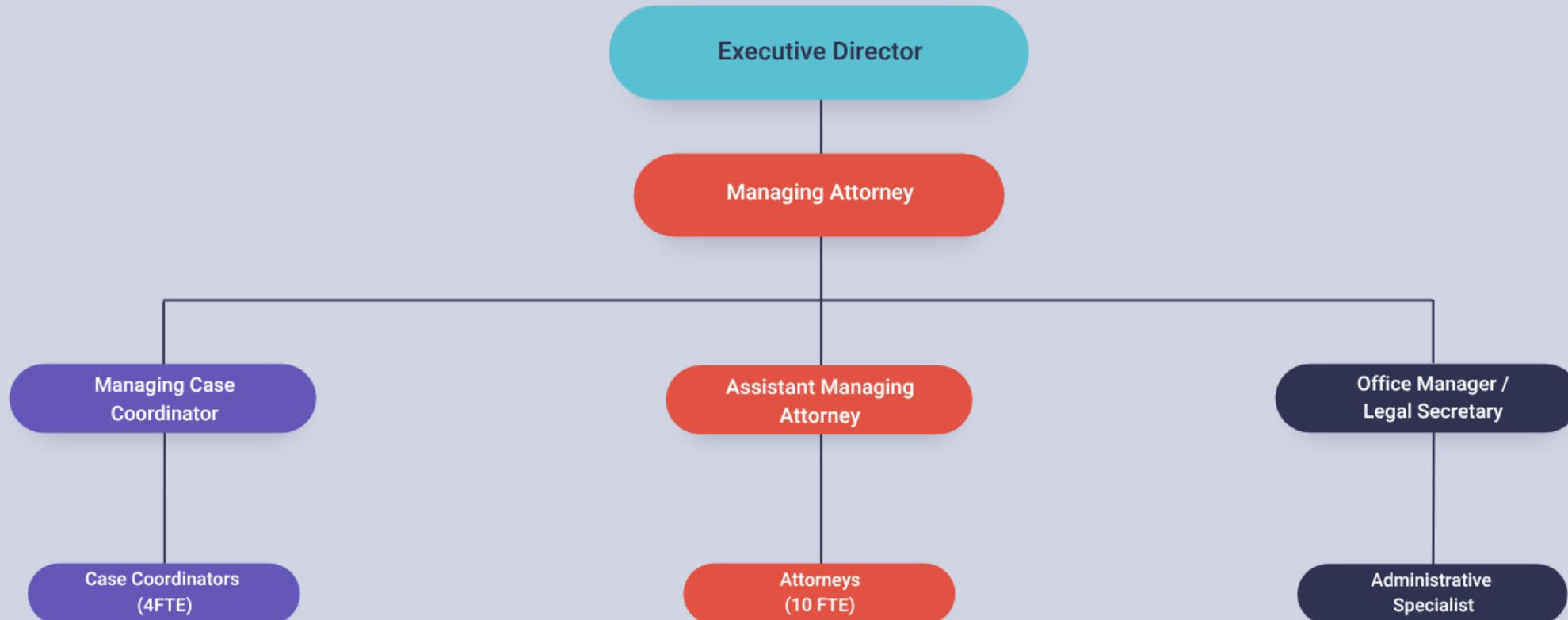
OCR cultivates an environment of respect, honesty, and equity. We value the diverse experiences and expertise of the children we serve, our attorneys, and our staff. We invest time to reflect and connect, focus on strengths, value feedback, and recognize success. We stand for justice and support each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

COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE (OCR) DENVER OFFICE ORG. CHART (20 FTE)



COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE (OCR)

COLORADO SPRINGS OFFICE ORG. CHART (19 FTE)



250 Contract Attorneys

Serve the entire state, doing public interest legal work at a substantially lower rate than private sector attorneys. These dedicated attorneys run solo or small firms and are paid an hourly rate, without any employee benefits.

OCR ATTORNEYS ARE APPOINTED IN 12 DIFFERENT CASE TYPES

- GAL or CFY is appointed for EVERY child or youth named in a D&N case in Colorado.
- CFY is appointed for every youth in a Foster Youth in Transition Program case.
- GALs are appointed for every youth 16 or 17 years of age applying for a marriage license.
- GALs are appointed for every youth in detention.
- GALs are appointed at the discretion of the court in all other case types.



Dependency
and Neglect

Foster Youth
in Transition
Program

Underage
Marriage

Juvenile
Delinquency &
Direct File

Minor
Parents

Probate

Domestic
Relations

Truancy

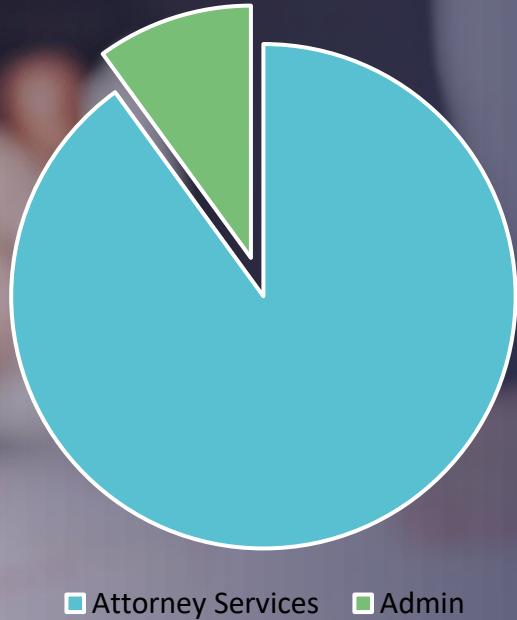
Paternity &
Child Support

Mental Health

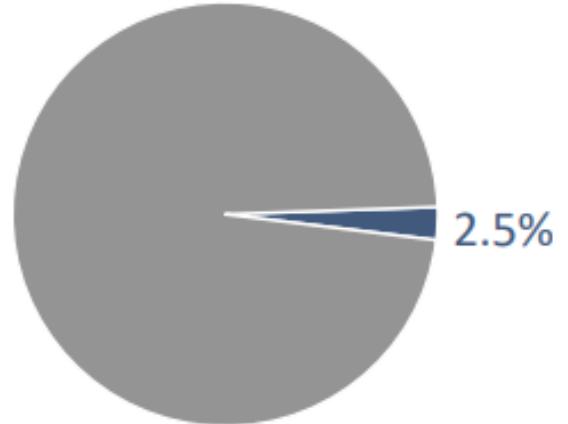
Adoption &
Relinquishment

Victim/
Witness

OCR Budget



Independent Agencies' Share of Statewide General Fund



Based on the FY 2025-26 appropriation.

Distribution of General Fund by Independent Agency



Based on the FY 2025-26 Appropriation



COLORADO OFFICE OF
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FY27 Budget Request

Caseload/Workload Adjustment



Reduction of **\$871,124**
General Fund Appropriation



COLORADO OFFICE OF
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Performance Plan

Fiscal Year 2026





FY26 Wildly Important Goals (WIG)

OCR WIG #1: OCR will develop and prepare to launch an updated case management and billing system that improves usability, performance, and underlying data structure while retaining the essential functionality of the current system.





FY26 Wildly Important Goals (WIG)

OCR WIG #2: OCR will further amplify youth voice in their cases, with a focus on advocating for procedural justice for children and youth, decision grounded in their unique experiences, needs and perspective, and trauma informed, equitable, and culturally responsive services, care, and supports.



Ongoing Performance Goals

FY2026



Goal 1: PROVIDE CHILDREN AND YOUTH A VOICE IN THE COLORADO LEGAL SYSTEM THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ATTORNEY SERVICES AND ADVOCACY.



Goal 2: OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCIES IN OCR OVERSIGHT AND BILLING.



Goal 3: 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.

Select Performance Plan Numbers (FY25)

250
Contract
attorneys

9
youth
events

137 Case
reference
interviews
conducted

156 Court
observations
completed

16 unique
on-demand
training
courses
accessible
statewide.

90% of
allocation
spent on
attorney
services

163 youth
surveys

92% of youth
report their
attorney should
continue to
represent youth

4 Average
days from
invoice
submission to
payment in
state financial
system

93 New
CLEs
provided

Over 12
different
case
types

95% of
initial visits
completed
within 30
days

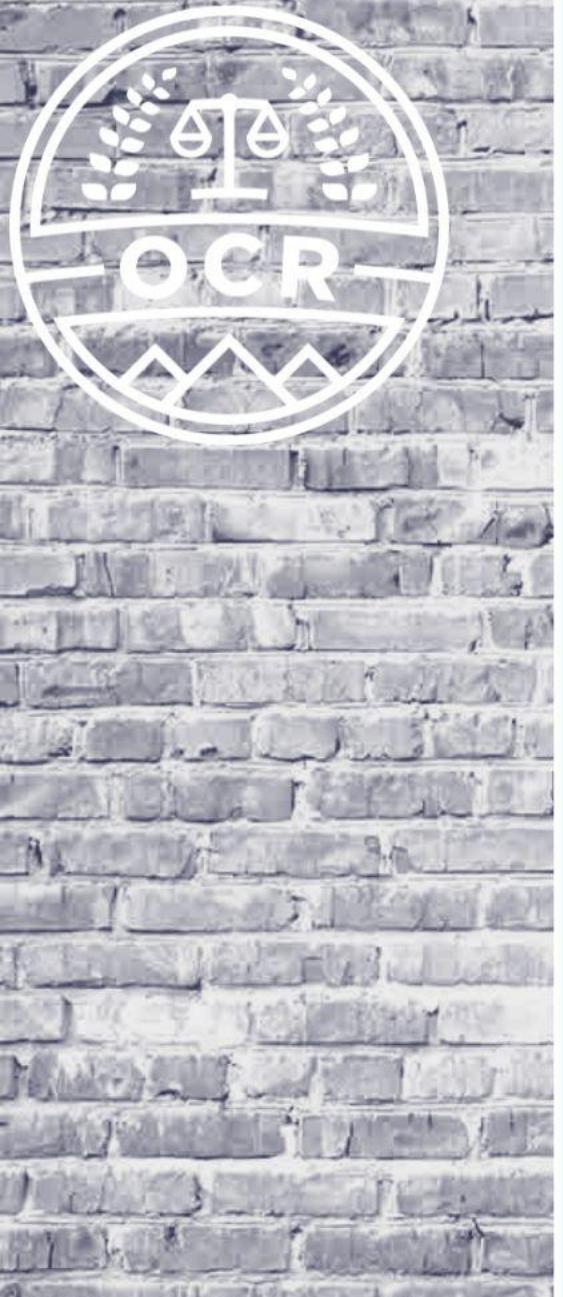
445
Judicial
Surveys
Received

98% of Judicial
Officers report the
GAL/CFY has the
requisite
knowledge and
skills to provide
effective legal
representation

285 up-to-
date hours
of training
and CLEs
available
online.



Legislative Agenda



2026 Legislation

- OCR is seeking legislation to restore children and youth rights to be heard in their D&N cases that existed for nearly 40 years.
- *People in the Interest of R.M.P.*, decided by the Colorado Supreme Court in June 2025, overturned an almost 40-year Court of Appeals case holding that children and youth have the right to a hearing before their D&N case can be dismissed.
- The R.M.P. decision gives county departments unilateral authority to dismiss a D&N proceeding prior to adjudication, stripping the court of its authority, impacting a variety of youth party rights, and in contradiction to recent bi-partisan legislation.

“ I trusted [my GAL] because we developed a bond during my time in the foster care system. She demonstrated many positive qualities that would make anyone feel confident in her, even during difficult moments. ”

~ Youth feedback regarding their GAL/CFY



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THANK YOU!

Questions?

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