



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

Performance Plan

Fiscal Year 2026

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.

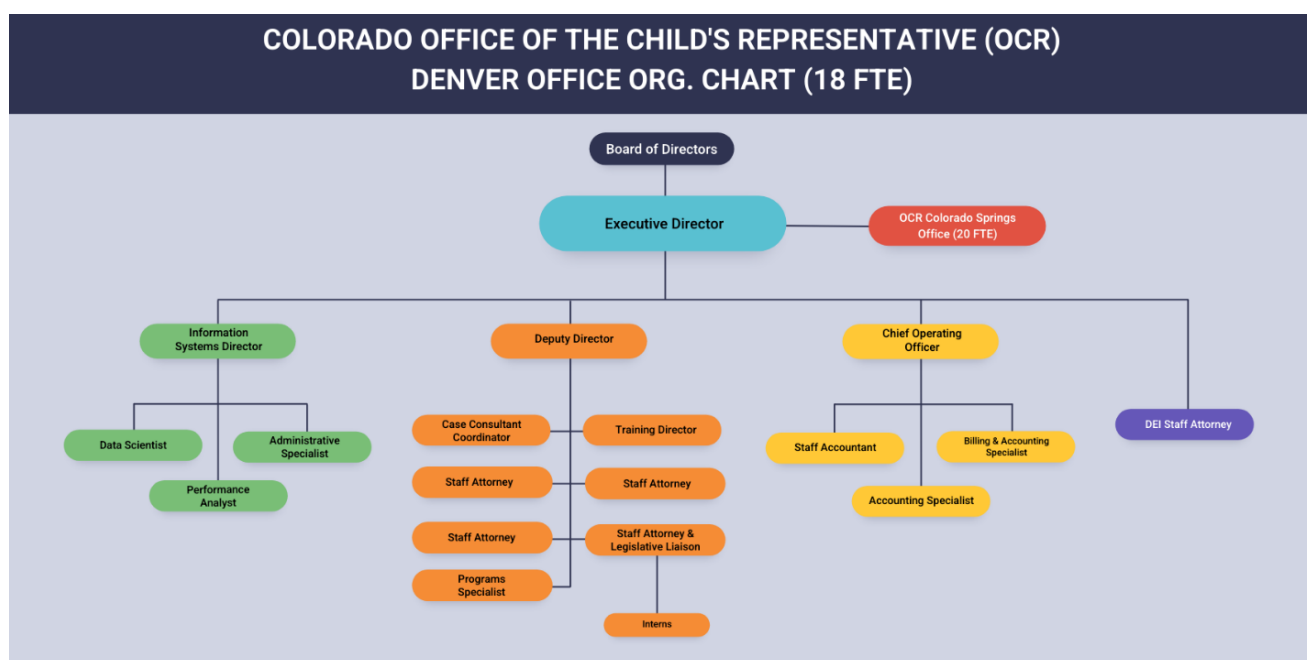
Overview

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:

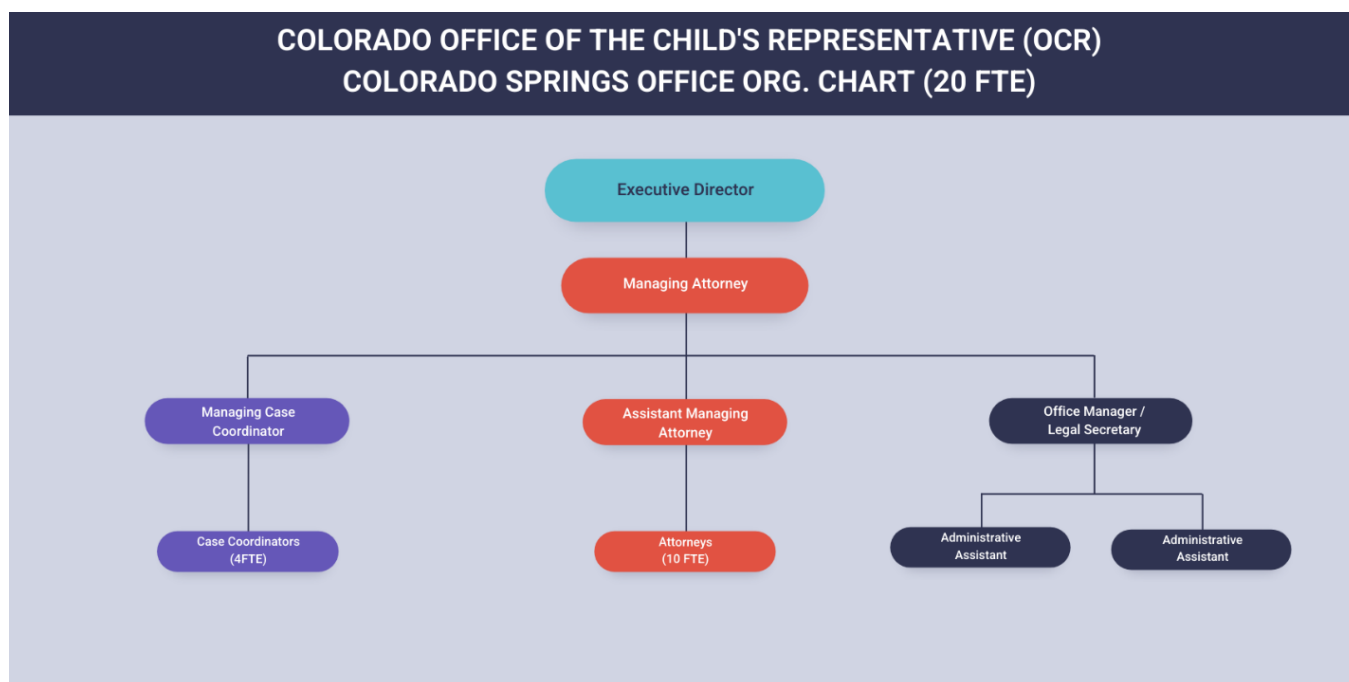
- Ensure provision of uniform, high-quality legal representation to children involved in judicial proceedings in Colorado.
- Enhance the provision of guardian ad litem (“GAL”) or Counsel for Youth (“CFY”) services in Colorado.
- Provide high-quality, accessible training throughout the state.
- Make recommendations 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. Over the last 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 has two offices:

The Executive Office, located in the Ralph Carr Judicial Center (1300 Broadway, Suite 320, Denver, CO 80203) houses OCR’s Executive Director, Chris Henderson, and his staff:



The Colorado Springs Office operates under OCR's Executive Director and provides high-quality GAL and CFY representation to children and youth in the 4th Judicial District through a multidisciplinary legal office model. The Colorado Springs Office is managed by Nicole Lyells:



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. OCR is responsible for payment and oversight of the following mandatory appointments:

CASE TYPE	OCR RESPONSIBILITY
Dependency & Neglect	All GAL and CFY appointments, including appeals.
Foster Youth in Transition (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 of the parties ordered to be responsible for the costs are indigent or the minor's estate is deemed indigent.
Adoption & Relinquishment	GAL appointments where at least one party ordered to be responsible for the cost is indigent. (Note: some CFY appointments are mandated, when the CFY represents the youth in a companion D&N case).
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.

In addition, OCR may be responsible for appointments in other proceedings when the Court deems it necessary.

Attorney Roles

Within each proceeding there are different statutory roles and responsibilities. Overall, however, the roles of the attorneys remain the same. GALs and CLRs represent the best interests of the child or youth they are appointed to and the attorney's professional duties flow to the best interests of the child. GALs are appointed to independently investigate the best interests of the child and advocate for those best interests through all stages of the proceedings. CLRs have a similar role and are appointed only in Domestic Relations (DR) cases. CFYs represent the youth's stated position and the attorney's professional duties directly flow from the youth as a client. CFYs are appointed to independently investigate, counsel the youth, and advocate for the youth's position throughout all stages of the proceedings.

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, who have a 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 in the state. They promote the safety and well-being of children and youth and ensure children and youth have a voice throughout their legal proceedings.

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.

Strategies:

- a) *Complete vendor selection and project kickoff aligned with the specifications outlined in OCR's Scope of Work and System Functionality Overview.*
- b) *Finalize system architecture and complete development milestones.*
- c) *Conduct thorough user acceptance testing to validate key workflows and system behavior.*
- d) *Migrate and validate essential internal reports for oversight, billing, and youth metrics.*
- e) *Prepare for go-live through change management and deployment planning in collaboration with the selected vendor.*

OCR WIG #2

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

Strategies:

- a) *Develop and implement systematic and effective litigation, communication, and negotiation strategies to:*
 - i. *Ensure decisionmakers, caretakers, and other parties fully understand the experience and needs of every child and youth,*
 - ii. *Preserve and advance procedural justice,*
 - iii. *Advocate for youth-centered and trauma-informed care, services, and supports.*
- b) *Create new training content to be delivered at each major conference for the year (OCR's Fall Conference, Spring Conference, and Trial Skills Training) focused on trauma-informed representation, how trauma manifests in behavior, using client narratives to elevate advocacy and client experience, and preserving and advancing procedural justice.*
- c) *Identify data and implement strategies to assist attorneys in advocating for culturally responsive practices and against harmful biases, assumptions, and stereotypes.*
- d) *Assess new methods to qualitatively evaluate youth participation in court, the in-court experience for youth, and court practices related to youth participation.*

OCR's Performance Goals and Strategies

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

Strategies:

- a) *Ensure children's and youth's voice, interests, and rights are paramount throughout the proceedings and in the development of policy, law, and practice.*
- b) *Provide and promote effective use of case consultant (CC) support to attorneys.*

- c) *Provide oversight and evaluation of attorney practice.*
- d) *Establish fair and reasonable compensation for OCR attorneys and members of their legal team.*
- e) *Recruit and retain a well-qualified, diverse pool of attorneys to meet each district's needs.*

GOAL 2: OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCIES IN OCR OVERSIGHT AND BILLING.

Strategies:

- a) *Manage appropriations efficiently.*
- b) *Optimize use and effectiveness of CARES.*
- c) *Process, manage, and evaluate attorney billings in a timely manner.*

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.

Strategies:

- a) *Cultivate a learning and practice environment that supports excellence in legal representation.*
- b) *Deliver high-quality accessible training to advance best practice and youth rights, address emerging topics in relevant fields, and implement OCR's Core Competencies.*
- c) *Assess attorney and case consultant education and support needs.*
- d) *Maintain and disseminate current and relevant resources for attorney and case consultant use regarding relevant law, social science, and equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice (EDIJ) strategies.*

Goal 1

Provide children and youth a voice and protect their rights in the Colorado legal system through effective and efficient attorney services and advocacy.

It is the core of OCR's mission and legislative mandates to provide youth a voice and protect the rights of children and youth in the system through effective attorney services. All of OCR's activities and strategies flow from this vital charge. OCR's oversight, training, resource development, litigation support, work with lived experts, and policy advocacy (whether legislative, through rule, or via amicus briefs and appellate work) all center on this goal. OCR grounds its analysis in all aspects on what OCR attorneys need to effectively advocate for the needs, interests, rights, and voices of children and youth in cases.

In addition, OCR continued to advance youth voice and youth rights in FY25 through implementation of HB24-1017, which provides enforceable rights for children and youth in foster care.

OCR has a robust "Engaging and Empowering Youth" program which focuses on increasing youth attendance in court, incorporating youth feedback into OCR policies and programming,

disseminating up-to-date and accessible youth resources, and gathering youth surveys. Additionally, OCR reports on state-wide data and provides training to promote youth voice in court proceedings. While youth attendance at court is a complex data point because it is impacted by judicial officers and other parties as much as youth and OCR attorneys, OCR believes its attorneys are in a strong position to encourage this policy and effectuate change across the state.

OCR uses its case management and billing system, CARES, to report on several areas of youth voice. In addition to the youth in court report mentioned above, OCR runs reports related to youth contact and compliance with initial visit requirements. Youth data is reflected below, in Chart A.

OCR's Lived Expert Action Panel (LEAP)

LEAP began in 2021 and is currently comprised of 14 young adults with lived experience in D&N, FYTP, JD, and/or truancy proceedings. LEAP members helped provide training to attorneys and other parties involved in child welfare and delinquency proceedings, provided extensive training regarding the Foster Youth Bill of Rights (HB24-1017), and are preparing to train nationally. In addition, they drafted the FYBOR Notice form, participated in youth events including an event with a delegation from Japan, are working on CDHS regulations, and provided input on legislation, such as their compelling testimony at the Colorado Capitol regarding HB25-1271 (Federal Benefits for Youth in Foster Care).

Youth Outreach

As part of the OCR's Engaging and Empowering Youth program, OCR attends or hosts (either remotely or in person) youth events across the state. At these events, OCR speaks with young people involved in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system. Thus far, in FY25, OCR has completed 10 of these events. Youth who attend these events are offered the opportunity to provide direct feedback regarding their OCR attorney through an anonymous survey. This survey is also available on the OCR's youth page, giving OCR direct feedback from youth working with OCR attorneys.

Further, OCR conducts youth reference interviews as part of its contract renewal process, providing direct youth feedback about current contract attorneys. In FY25, OCR conducted 40 youth reference interviews regarding 41 attorneys up for renewal. This feedback is incorporated into the attorney's evaluation regarding compliance with OCR practice standards and is discussed with each attorney during their renewal interview. OCR was recently [featured](#) by the Family Justice Initiative for its data collection efforts around youth engagement and court attendance. Additional data in the chart below comes from Court Observation forms, Stakeholder feedback surveys, youth events, and youth surveys.

Goal 1: Provide children and youth a voice and protect their rights in the Colorado legal system through effective attorney services and advocacy.

CHART A	FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24		FY25		FY26		FY27		FY28	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
# of youth events attended or sponsored	5	4	5	12	8	12	10	11	10		10		15		15	
# of youth surveys received	100	18	100	140	100	137	100	107	100		100		100		100	
% of renewing attorneys w/ at least 1 youth reference interview	95%	88%	95%	100%	95%	99%	95%	87%	95%		95%		95%		95%	
% of youth over 12 who attended a benchmark, permanency, or review hearing	Est. Base line	19%	20%	20%	25%	26%	25%	32%	30%		35%		37%		37%	
% of youth report attorney talked to them about the right to go to Court ¹	70%	63%	70%	83%	75%	83%	75%	88%	80%		90%		90%		95%	
% of youth report they trusted their OCR attorney always/usually	-	-	Est Base Line	77%	80%	78%	80%	91%	85%		90%		93%		95%	
% of youth report their GAL/CFY should continue to represent youth	-	-	Est Base Line	88%	90%	90%	90%	93%	92%		92%		95%		95%	
% of initial 30-day visits completed	100%	97%	100%	95%	100%	95%	98%	95%	98%		98%		98%		98%	

Case Consultant Support

Multidisciplinary law practice is a well-accepted best practice that the OCR is working to infuse throughout the state. Attorneys may hire their own social work professional, referred to as a case consultant (CC), or they may engage the services of an OCR contract CC to work on specific cases. The use of CCs allows additional work on cases at a lower hourly rate, provides social science

¹ This question changed slightly for FY22 when the youth survey was updated and streamlined. The concept in previous year reporting is similar so it is reported in this line.

expertise to complement the attorney's expertise, and can enhance attorney contact with children/youth and other parties. Case Consultant I level professionals must have either a license in a relevant field, a Master's in a relevant field, or a Bachelor's in a relevant field plus at least 2 years of relevant experience. Case Consultant II level professionals must be licensed as a Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Professional Counselor (LPC), or Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT). In FY25 OCR contracts directly with 17 CCs (3 of whom are Spanish speaking) who are available state-wide. So far in this fiscal year, CCs have assisted on over one-third of OCR D&N and FYTP appointments statewide. OCR continues to review the CC program and policies, using Title IV-E funds to enhance and update the program when indicated.

Attorney Oversight and Evaluation

Child welfare cases are fact specific and individualized, which means that appropriate results for one child may not be appropriate for another child. Because of this, the practice does not lend itself to simple outcome-based analysis, which is why the OCR concentrates its data collection on compliance with practice standards. Every year OCR establishes lists of attorneys eligible for OCR appointments in each of the 23 judicial districts across the state. OCR uses a comprehensive evaluation strategy and benchmarks to ensure compliance with practice standards and relevant chief justice directives related to the practice as it establishes these eligibility or appointment lists. These benchmarks can be accessed [here](#) by clicking on the Applications Timeline, and then clicking on "OCR Verifications and Renewal Information Sources Chart" at the top. This evaluation strategy includes:

- 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 their disciplinary history, verify fulfillment of OCR training requirements, and verify malpractice insurance requirements. Every three years, 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 Renewal 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 Verification
- 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, the OCR processed 229 verifications and renewal applications and received 36 additional new applications. OCR also investigates complaints filed regarding OCR appointments and contract attorneys that meet [OCR complaint requirements](#). OCR endeavors to finalize its investigation of those complaints in a timely manner and will establish a baseline in FY26 for future performance reporting.

Judicial Officer Stakeholder Surveys and Case Reference Interviews

OCR seeks judicial feedback for each verifying or renewing attorney through an annual survey administered statewide to Judicial Officers presiding in relevant case types. In FY25, OCR received a total of 445 survey responses concerning 204 attorneys.

OCR also seeks direct feedback from youth, caregivers, and parents for each renewing attorney through case reference interviews. These are done with a standardized script to ensure consistency and provide meaningful feedback directly from parties that are working with OCR attorneys. In FY25, OCR interviewed 137 total references concerning 41 attorneys.

Court Observations

Court observations are done using separate standardized forms for D&N cases and for JD cases. In FY25, OCR conducted 156 observations involving 47 attorneys and 209 children/youth.

Goal 1: Provide children and youth a voice in the Colorado legal system through effective attorney services and advocacy.

CHART B	FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24		FY25		FY26		FY27		FY28	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
Judicial Officers report Attny always or usually attends hearings in person or virtually ² .	97%	99%	100%	99%	100%	92%	100%	97%	98%		98%		98%		98%	

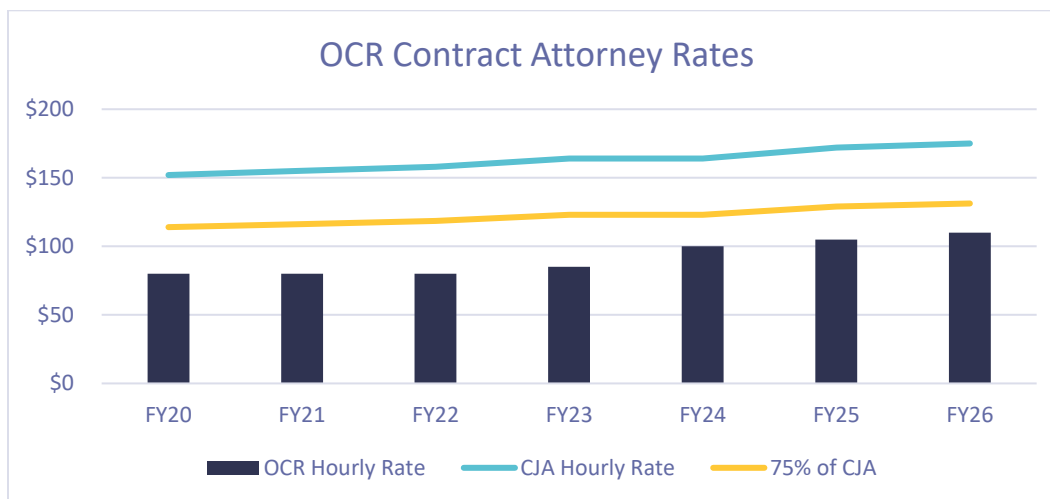
² The verbiage of this question changed in FY24 to better reflect current judicial practices. The substance of the question is largely the same so historical data is still included in this line.

Appointed Attorney Personally Appeared in OCR Court Observations	95%	97%	98%	95%	98%	97%	98%	96%	98%		98%		98%		98%	
Judicial Officers strongly agree or agree Attny possesses requisite knowledge and skills to provide effective legal rep	-	-	-	-	Est. Bench mark	97%	98%	98%	98%		98%		98%		98%	
Judicial Officers report GALs always / usually advise the court of the child's position.	-	-	-	-	-	-	Est Bench mark	95%	98%		98%		98%		98%	
Judicial Officers report CFY always/usually advocates for expressed interests by stating youth's position at each hearing.	-	-	-	-	-	-	Est Bench mark	78%	80%		82%		85%		90%	
Attorneys Strongly Agree/Agree they are able to access a case consultant when they need one	-	-	-	-	-	-	Est Bench mark	81%	80%		85%		85%		90%	
Complaints closed by OCR in a timely manner	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Est. Bench mark							

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. Thanks to the Colorado General Assembly, C.R.S. 21-2-105 (2)(b) requires annual increases until the OCR contract attorney hourly rate is at least 75% of the rate set pursuant to the Federal "Criminal Justice Act Revision of 1986", which sets rates for indigent representation in federal court. As of July 1, 2025, the OCR contract attorney hourly rate will increase to \$110/hour. The current CJA rate for non-capitol cases is \$175/hour putting the OCR attorney rate 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 the non-attorney members of the legal team which did not change in the last fiscal year.



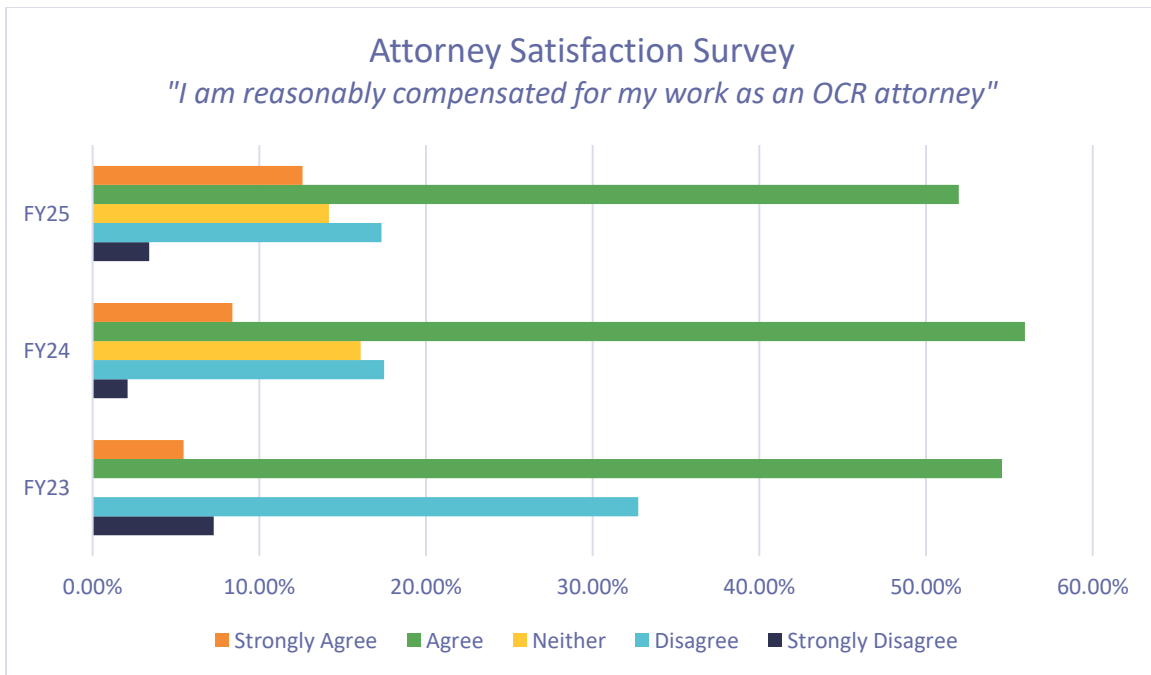
Recruitment and Retention

OCR's efforts to attain a more competitive 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 22 Judicial Districts. OCR acts in a variety of ways that are responsive to the results of the survey. For example, OCR:

- Changed communication strategies, with weekly announcements targeted to attorneys.
- Incorporated feedback into CARES 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 the Litigation Toolkit.

OCR's efforts to recruit and retain a diverse pool of attorneys includes outreach to specialty bar associations and networking, as well as updated applications, interview questions, and job postings. 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 nation-wide.

To further these efforts, OCR assigns staff attorneys as liaisons to specific judicial districts each year. This ensures each district has a contact who can provide support and training, as well as discuss issues specific to the district. The staff attorney liaison also assesses the needs of each district by collaborating with judicial officers, meeting with attorneys, reviewing judicial district filing statistics and OCR appointment data, and engaging in targeted recruitment efforts as indicated. These activities ensure attorneys who contract with the OCR are not overwhelmed by their caseloads and are able to sustain a practice.



GOAL 2

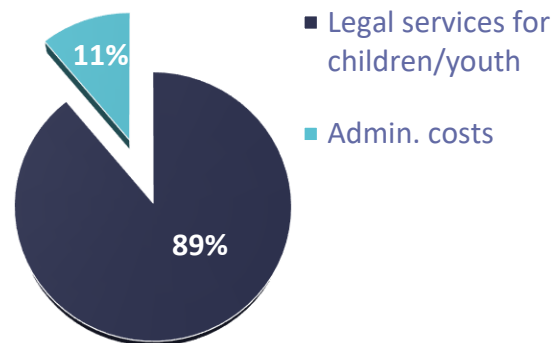
Optimize efficiencies in OCR oversight and billing.

Manage Appropriations

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 caseloads and workloads of contractors' 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 that these stay within the annual allocation amount. In FY25 (through 3/31/25), OCR used 89% of its expended funds for attorney services (including the CAC line item) and only 11% for administration. Through the first three quarters of the fiscal year, OCR has expended 72% of its appropriation and is currently on track to be within budget by the end of the fiscal year.

FY 25 Administrative Expenditures (through 3/31/25)



Optimize Use and Effectiveness of CARES

The current CARES system was released in 2018, underwent a significant update in 2022, and was updated again in 2023 to support client-directed representation. This proprietary case

management and billing system allows for streamlined billing, case management, and oversight reporting. CARES also allows OCR to track IV-E spending through a custom rules-based engine. OCR is working to secure a new vendor to develop the next iteration of CARES, ensuring it can meet the needs of the agency, attorneys, and other users. At the end of May, there were approximately 535 active users of CARES with 9,256 open appointments covering all OCR case types.

Through CARES, OCR does periodic reporting that aids in both Goal 1 and Goal 2, with the following reports:

- Child Counts per attorney
- 30-day initial visits in D&N cases
- Potential duplicate entries
- Non-attorney staff in court
- 12+ hours billed per day
- 15+ hours billed on an appointment/month
- Age maximums for D&N cases
- Risk sampling of high-cost contractors/appointments per quarter

Process, Manage, and Evaluate Contractor Billing

As illustrated above, OCR uses CARES to evaluate contractor billing and report on attorney compliance with practice standards. OCR's Operations Team processes invoices for attorneys each month with a multilevel review/approval system. While OCR has up to 45 days to pay an invoice, it endeavors to pay all undisputed invoices within 30 days of receipt. As of March 31, 2025, OCR staff processed 2,098 invoices through CARES and an additional 741 non-CARES payments. OCR appreciates the support of the General Assembly in authorizing the use of IV-E funds to develop a new generation of CARES that will keep CARES up to date and optimize oversight and billing efficiencies while improving data analyses and reporting.

Goal 2: Optimize efficiencies in attorney oversight and billing.																
CHART C	FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24		FY25		FY26		FY27		FY28	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
Non-CAC expenditures stay within budgeted appropriation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Avg. # of days from invoice submission to payment in state financial system	10	10	10	12	14	7	14	4.5	14		14		14		14	

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.

Cultivate a learning and practice environment that supports excellence in legal representation.

OCR has developed a learning and practice environment that infuses equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice principles throughout and focuses on ten overarching core competencies as the foundation of high-quality representation:

1. Role of Attorney and Legal Team
2. Youth Engagement and Empowerment
3. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice (EDIJ)
4. Legal Knowledge (appointed case and related legal proceedings)
5. Social Science Knowledge
6. Systems Context
7. Skills
8. Education
9. Wellbeing
10. Law Practice Management

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 through the Attorney Satisfaction Survey and monthly case-type staffings
- LEAP input and recommendations
- New state and federal legal and practice developments

For FY26, the training priorities are:

- Trauma Informed Practices and Advocacy
- Substance Abuse Treatment for Parents and Youth

Deliver high-quality accessible training to advance best practices, address emerging topics in relevant fields, and implement OCR's Core Competencies.

The General Assembly charged OCR with providing high-quality and accessible training throughout the state. 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 these requirements, OCR hosts an in person annual conference, a virtual Spring Conference, and provides periodic training throughout the year. It is vital this training be accessible to attorneys state-wide. To that end, OCR provides select webinars and endeavors to livestream in-person trainings when possible. OCR works with an audio/visual team to record

most OCR-sponsored trainings, to be archived and available on OCR's website. At the end of FY25, OCR will have a total of 285 current and up to date hours of training available online for easy accessibility across the state. Additionally, OCR provided a non-CLE training directly to youth regarding the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

To further enhance learning opportunities and state-wide accessibility, the OCR has developed a curriculum for e-learning through on-demand courses. Currently, the OCR has 15 unique on-demand courses, including:

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

In FY25, OCR offered 93 CLEs, including:

- 2-day in-person fall conference,
- 1-day virtual spring conference,
- 4 days of in-person new attorney Core Competency trainings,
- 1-day in person litigation strategies training,
- 1 day in-person TBRI training,
- 6 webinars,
- 2 co-sponsored trainings with community partners,
- 4 e-learning online courses covering the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

These trainings focused 4 different case types (D&N, Delinquency, FYTP, and Domestic Relations) though many of these trainings are applicable to multiple OCR case types. In addition, OCR offered 21 case staffings covering Counsel for Youth, Probate, Domestic Relations, and Foster Youth in Transition cases, as well as monthly Youth Justice case staffings, as an opportunity for attorneys to discuss legal and advocacy strategies with their colleagues and OCR staff. Training in the areas of the law covered by OCR attorneys requires a nimble approach as the law is continually evolving; therefore, the OCR training program must continually change to remain up-to-date and relevant.

To further deliver high-quality training, the OCR offers scholarships to state and national conferences to support contractor learning and community building. In FY25, OCR offered a total of 10 scholarships to attorneys.

Maintain and disseminate current and relevant resources for attorney and case consultant use regarding relevant law, social science, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies.

OCR invests significant staff time in developing and maintaining high-quality tools and programs to support Goal 3 such as:

- [Guided Reference in Dependency \(GRID\)](#) – comprehensive advocacy guide published in 2012 and rewritten in 2018 and 2025 to address comprehensive legal and practice developments, including the changes to the legal model through HB22-1038, family time, and Foster Youth in Transition Program. This impressive guide covers 8 hearing specific chapters and 39 factsheets. It also includes practice tips, supporting citations, and case law. This expansive resource is updated annually and made available around January of each year, with a new plan to provide an updated print version on an annual basis.
- [Litigation Toolkit](#) – comprises pleadings, social science resources, and practice tools maintained throughout the year and periodically updated to reflect legal and practice developments.
- [Litigation Support List](#) – attorneys with subject matter expertise, 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 appeal for attorneys that are not certified.
- [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. So far, in FY25, OCR attorneys have sent 889 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.

Goal 3: The OCR will ensure attorneys remain current in state and federal law and regulations, social science research and evidence-based services.

CHART D	FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24		FY25		FY26		FY27		FY28	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
# new CLE hours sponsored by OCR/Year	80	85	85	83	85	91	85	79	85		85		85		85	
% of attorneys indicate OCR Training is tailored to meet the specialized needs of OCR attorneys (SA/A)	98%	94%	98%	93%	98%	91%	98%	95%	95%		95%		95%		95%	
% of attorneys indicated very satisfied/satisfied with GRID	95%	100%	95%	96%	95%	90%	95%	91%	95%		95%		95%		95%	
% of attorneys indicated very satisfied/satisfied with OCR Litigation Toolkit	95%	94%	95%	89%	95%	88%	95%	83%	95%		95%		95%		95%	

Conclusion

OCR is proud of the continued progress made by its staff and contract attorneys to further OCR's Mission and goals and looks forward to combining recent systemic changes to promote youth rights with case level advocacy to highlight youth voice and experience.