



# COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE

## Performance Management System

*Fiscal Year 2024*

### Mission

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

### Vision

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

### Values

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#### **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.

## Overview

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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 became a permanent independent state agency in 2010. In the last 22 years, OCR has worked diligently to successfully fulfill these mandates and improve the quality of legal services and representation of children and youth in Colorado.

OCR comprises 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 15-member staff. The Colorado Springs Office operates under OCR 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 and comprises 11 case-carrying attorneys, 5 case consultants (CCs), and administrative support staff.

OCR oversees approximately 275 attorneys who serve as GALs (representing the best interests of the child), CFY (representing the youth client directly), or Child's Legal Representatives ("CLR")(representing the best interests of the child in domestic relations proceedings). These attorneys span the entire state, representing children and youth (or their best interests) in all 22 judicial districts and covering 13 different case types.

## Continuous Improvement Process Timeline

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<b>July</b>	Submit and publish Performance Plan – July 1 Assess performance data/debrief meeting with management. Present Performance Plan to staff and analyze strengths and areas of need; start discussions about strategies for improvement. Assess and improve Performance Management System. Plan for Attorney Satisfaction Survey Questions. Begin Court Observations for attorneys that will be renewing their contracts this fiscal year.
<b>August/September</b>	Post OCR's Performance Management System – August 1 Finalize and administer the OCR Attorney Satisfaction Survey.
<b>October</b>	Draft Annual Performance Report. Review agency's job descriptions for currentness and revise as necessary. Prepare annual budget, taking into consideration information obtained through OCR performance data.
<b>November</b>	Submit and publish Annual Performance Report – Nov. 1 Share results of Annual Performance Report and disseminate to central office staff. Plan for engaging contractors/agency employees regarding relevant assessment and improvement strategies. Submit annual budget request to the Joint Budget Committee.
<b>December</b>	Review Performance Plan and make decisions about content – assess whether anything is outdated, no longer needed, or if new data is available.
<b>January/February</b>	Publish Winter Performance Evaluation. Present to joint legislative committees of reference and the JBC. Judicial Survey administered.
<b>March</b>	Finalize court observations for renewal Attorneys – March 1 Finalize case reference interviews - March 31 Collect annual verification forms and applications. Meet with OCR staff to engage in strategic planning for next year's Performance Plan, discuss potential WIGs and review/update other goals as needed.
<b>April</b>	Compile attorney performance data. Gather Performance Plan data and finalize the WIG. Assess district needs.
<b>May/June</b>	Assess attorney performance data in conjunction with OCR Benchmarks. Gather remaining data for the Performance Plan and begin drafting. Interview renewing attorneys and evaluate attorney practice data. Identify training needs. Finalize the Performance Plan.

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## WILDLY IMPORTANT GOAL (WIG)

OCR WILL FURTHER ADVANCE YOUTH RIGHTS IN COLORADO LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AND CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE RELATED POLICY INITIATIVES. YOUTH ENCOMPASSES THE AGES OF 0 – 21 YEARS OLD AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE IN AN INTENTIONAL EFFORT TO RECOGNIZE, DEFINE, PROTECT, AND ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS AND RIGHTS ON INDIVIDUAL CASES AND IN THE LAW AND POLICY ATTORNEYS RELY ON TO ADVOCATE FOR THOSE INTERESTS.

### FY24 Goals and Strategies

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

- a) Ensure children's and youth's voice and interests 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.
- e) Recruit and retain a sufficient pool of qualified attorneys to meet each district's needs.

**GOAL 2:**  
OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCIES IN OCR OVERSIGHT AND BILLING.

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

**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.

- a) Cultivate a learning and practice environment that supports excellence in legal representation.
- b) Deliver high-quality accessible training to advance best practices, 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 diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies.