



COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE

Performance Management System

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 18-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 includes case-carrying attorneys, case consultants (CCs), and administrative support staff.

OCR oversees approximately 250 contract attorneys who serve as Guardians *ad Litem* ("GAL" - representing the best interests of the child), Counsel for youth ("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 23 judicial districts and covering 12 different case types.

Continuous Improvement Process Timeline

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| July | Submit and publish Performance Plan – July 1
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. |
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August/September	Post OCR's Performance Management System – August 1 Finalize and administer the OCR Attorney Satisfaction Survey.
October	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.
November	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. 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. Submit annual budget request to the Joint Budget Committee.
December	Review Performance Plan and make decisions about content – assess whether anything is outdated, no longer needed, needs adjusted, or if new data is available.
January/February	Publish Winter Performance Evaluation. Present to joint legislative committees of reference and the JBC. Judicial Survey administered.
March	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 and measures to reflect practice and legal developments as needed.
April	Compile attorney performance data. Gather Performance Plan data and finalize the WIG. Assess district needs.
May/June	Assess attorney performance data in conjunction with OCR Benchmarks. Gather remaining data for the Performance Plan and begin drafting. Interview new and renewing attorneys and evaluate attorney practice data. Identify training needs. Finalize the Performance Plan. Send Performance Plan for ADA remediation.



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FY26 Goals and Strategies

FY26 WILDLY IMPORTANT GOALS (WIG)

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.

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.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE GOALS

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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.