



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

**General Assembly Report**

**Fiscal Year 2023**



## 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.

## Highlights from Fiscal Year 2023

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FY23 was a transformative year for OCR, recently recognized by the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC). The NACC awarded OCR with its 2023 Outstanding Children’s Law Office of the Year award as an organization making significant contributions to the rights and well-being of children and families through excellence in legal representation. The NACC noted OCR’s prioritization of youth voice and lived expertise, advancement of multidisciplinary legal representation, DEI efforts, HB22-1038, and attorney compensation rates. OCR is honored to receive this award and believes it reflects the



efforts of hundreds of attorneys throughout Colorado who enter a child or youth’s life as a Guardian ad Litem (“GAL”), Child’s Legal Representative (“CLR”), or Counsel for Youth (“CFY”).

One of the primary accomplishments of FY23 was the successful implementation of HB22-1038 and the resulting child and youth party status, right to attend and meaningfully participate in court, and change in the model of legal representation for youth 12 and older in their dependency and neglect (D&N) proceedings. Before HB22-1038 went into effect, all children and youth in D&N proceedings had an attorney Guardian ad Litem (“GAL”) who represented the youth’s best interests in court. Now, youth 12 and older in D&N proceedings have counsel for youth (“CFY”) who represent the youth’s position in court.

Implementing this important youth rights legislation was OCR’s Wildly Important Goal (“WIG”) in FY23. It required significant efforts from all members of the team. Months of planning, meeting with experts from other states and national organizations, collaborating with the Office of Attorney Regulation and engaging in extensive legal research, CARES design, and resource development set OCR up to provide robust training and support to attorneys and other professionals across the state in making this change. OCR required all contractors to attend the first day of OCR’s Fall Conference as a kickoff to implementation. To support this training mandate, OCR used reappropriated federal funds to reimburse contractors for their time and travel to attend in person. After the fall conference, OCR offered a series of issue-specific training to focus on complicated implementation pieces. As the implementation date drew near, OCR hosted weekly office hours to staff cases and answer contractor questions about the change. Meanwhile, OCR began to deliver training to numerous other stakeholders such as CASA, various county departments, County Attorneys, Respondent Parent Counsel, and more. So far, implementation has been a success, and OCR is thrilled that youth in Colorado have a more authentic voice in their D&N proceedings.

OCR created a new logo and launched a completely redesigned website in FY23, featuring the new branding look. This new website is designed to be ADA-compliant and user-friendly, with

improved content organization. Other deliverables, including the OCR quarterly newsletter and Training Tuesday email bulletins, were also updated.

During this fiscal year, OCR welcomed two new staff members, Katie Hecker as the Youth Justice Staff Attorney and Ben Ureles as a Performance Analyst. In addition, the OCR Case Consultant (“CC”) program continued to grow, with 17 OCR Contract CCs available to attorneys across the state, including CCs that cover rural jurisdictions and speak Spanish. Finally, OCR welcomed three new board members to fill vacancies and to meet new congressional districting requirements.

After a busy legislative session, OCR began overseeing a new mandatory appointment with the passage of HB23-1307. This bill requires a GAL to be appointed for every youth detained pursuant to Article 2.5 of Title 19. These appointments continue until the youth is released from detention unless the court also finds a basis for the appointment pursuant to C.R.S. §19-1-111 (2)(a).

Under its new leadership, the Colorado Springs office has undertaken several new initiatives, while carrying full caseloads. Some of the new initiatives include ensuring the best practices in multidisciplinary representation and advocating for qualified outside providers to meet the needs of their clients.

OCR is proud of the accomplishments achieved this fiscal year and dedicated to continued improvement.

*"[S]he made me feel important. She would always ask what [I wanted] then go from there. [She was] very supportive. [S]he always thought about what was beneficial to me and then also what I wanted. [She] knew my comforts and discomforts and looked out for my best interests. [When] I had a hard time finding a placement, [she] worked things out with my mom and family and got me back home which I was really happy about."*

*– Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney*

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## OCR Board of Directors

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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 there must not be more than five members 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*.
- **Gwen Schooley (Vice-Chair)**  
Advocate, Eighth Congressional District, Unaffiliated, *Executive Director of A Kids Place/CASA Program and Child Advocacy Center*.
- **Margaret Fix Seboldt**  
Attorney, Fourth Congressional District, Democrat, *Solo-Practitioner*.
- **Don Moseley**  
Advocate, Seventh Congressional District, Democrat, *Executive Director of Ralston House*.
- **Susan Ryan**  
Attorney, Third Congressional District, Unaffiliated, *Holland and Hart (Aspen)*.
- **Maria Valdez**  
Attorney, Sixth Congressional District, Unaffiliated, *retired GAL (Arapahoe County)*
- **Victoria Shuler**  
Advocate, Sixth Congressional District, Democrat, *Denver Director of Fostering Great Ideas*.
- **Vacancies**  
There are two vacancies on the Board, and filling these vacancies has been significantly more challenging in the last few years. OCR has filled three empty Board positions this past year and will continue to work diligently to fill the remaining two positions.

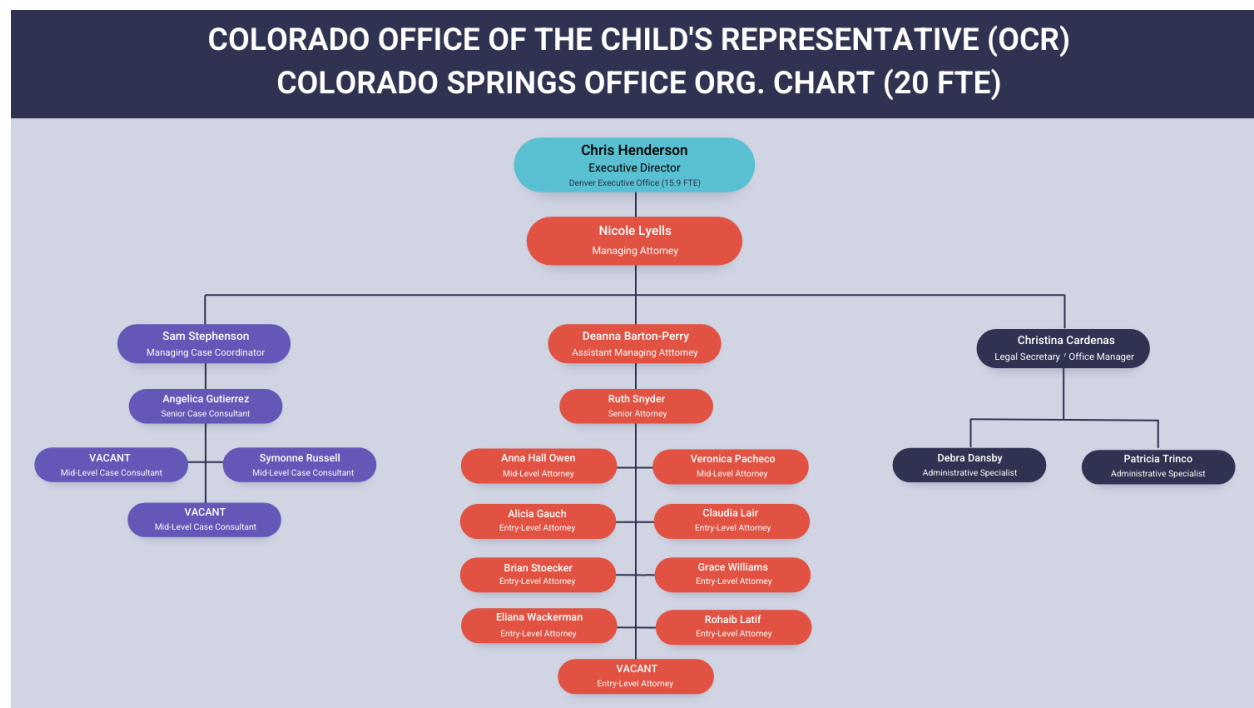
## OCR LEAP Members

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 of interest to the panel and what OCR and its 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 members are:

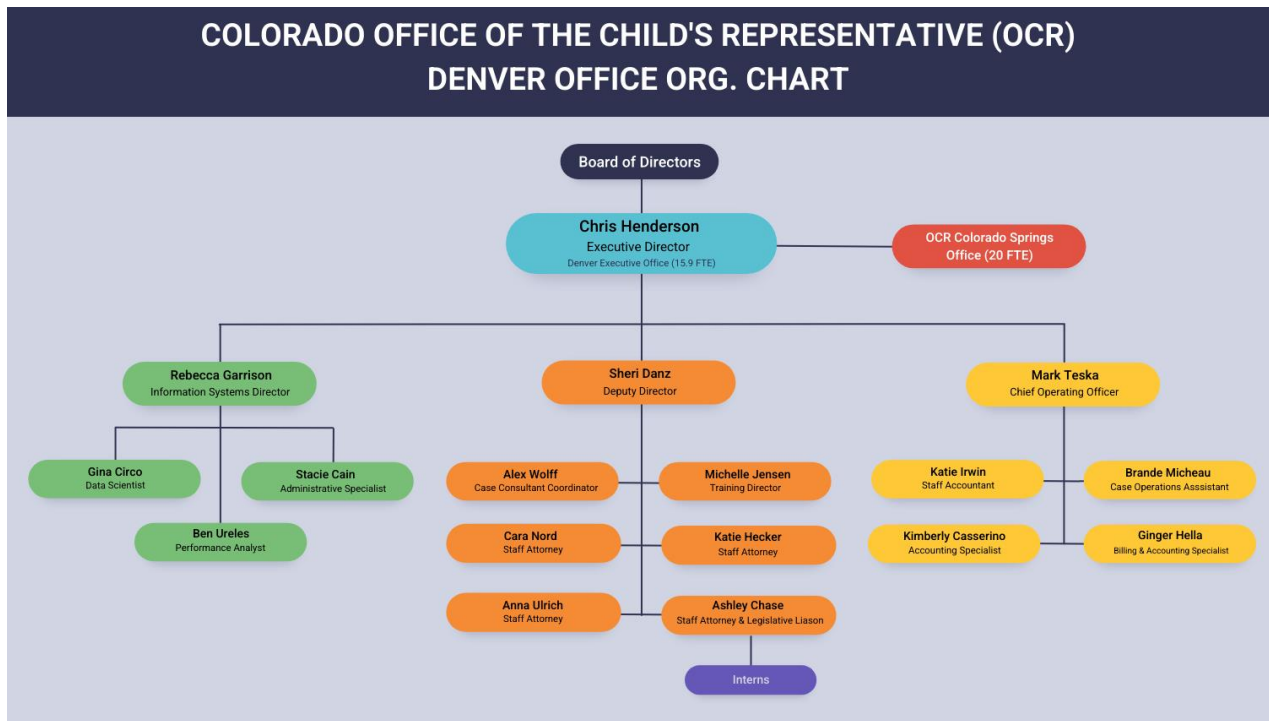
- **Emilio Acosta**
- **Elizabeth Arrieta**
- **Maya Chandler**
- **Khelani Collins**
- **Shelby Costello**
- **Braeden (last name withheld at Braeden's request)**
- **Nyomi Davis**
- **Alexandra Jones**
- **Amanda Martinez**
- **Alisiana Medina**
- **Maddie Noyce Lang**
- **Lindsay Saunders-Velez**

## 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, which is a multidisciplinary law office that provides high-quality GAL and CFY representation to children and youth in El Paso County. The Colorado Springs Office is managed by Nicole Lyells and comprises 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:



## 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 became a permanent independent state agency in 2010 when the legislative sunset clause was removed. 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 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 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.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

OCR has continued its work to improve in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. OCR's DEI committee continues to meet and comprises internal staff and external contractors. Application and interview questions were further adjusted to focus on applicant attitudes and skills related to confronting the disparities that exist in child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Most

*"I have been going through processes with social services all my life and I had never had someone who went through so much time and effort to get to know our culture and to get things fixed for us."*

*- Caregiver feedback about an OCR attorney*

importantly, OCR successfully secured funding for a new DEI Attorney who will focus on DEI strategies and litigation support to address system disparities in the courtroom and through policy. OCR sincerely thanks the Joint Budget Committee and the General Assembly for your support of this important position. The position will be posted shortly and intentionally builds in a year for an applicant to become licensed in Colorado, with the hope that a wide range of applicants will apply from across the country.

### Attorney Services Provided by OCR

OCR oversees approximately 275 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 22 judicial districts. In FY23, OCR attorneys had open appointments across all case types for 15,193 children and youth in Colorado.

*He took the time to talk to me on more than just a case basis (school, job, friends, activities, my goals). [He] made it very clear what my rights were before every time we called prior to my court hearing. [He] always explained what was going on in cases even though I didn't want to hear it proved to be important later. [He] helped me see a realistic and attainable outcome in my case. He really cares about what he does. He has a full heart. He wants to help others and he's very intelligent.*

*- Youth feedback about an OCR attorney*

[Appointment lists](#) for each judicial district can be found on the OCR website. These public interest attorneys are predominately solo practitioners or small business owners. 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. OCR is responsible for the following mandatory appointments:

<b>CASE TYPE</b>	<b>OCR RESPONSIBILITY</b>
<b>Dependency &amp; Neglect</b>	All GAL and CFY appointments.
<b>Foster Youth in Transition Program (FYTP)</b>	All CFY assignments or appointments.
<b>Underage Party seeking a Marriage License</b>	All GAL appointments (GAL appointed for all youth 16-17 seeking a marriage license).
<b>Juvenile Delinquency – detained youth only</b>	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) <sup>1</sup>

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

<b>Case Type</b>	<b>OCR Responsibility</b>
<b>Delinquency &amp; Direct File</b>	All GAL appointments.
<b>Truancy</b>	All GAL appointments.
<b>Paternity &amp; Support</b>	GAL appointments where at least one party is indigent.
<b>Probate</b>	GAL appointments where at least one party is indigent.
<b>Adoption &amp; Relinquishment</b>	All GAL appointments.
<b>Mental Health</b>	All GAL appointments.
<b>Victim Witness</b>	All GAL appointments.
<b>Domestic Relations</b>	Child’s Legal Representative (“CLR”) appointments when one or both parties are indigent.
<b>D&amp;N GAL for a minor parent</b>	All GAL appointments.

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. GALs and CLRs represent the best interests of the child or youth they are appointed to represent, and their 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”)

<sup>1</sup> This is a new mandatory appointment created in HB23-1307, effective June 7, 2023.

cases. CFY represent the youth's stated position, and the attorney's professional duties flow to the youth client directly. CFY are appointed to independently investigate, counsel the youth, and advocate for the youth's position throughout all stages of the proceedings.

*"I am an independent person and am very good at advocating for myself. She would encourage me to keep talking and make the right choice. If she thought that I was not making the right choice, she would give alternatives. She made it feel personal. I didn't feel judged or anything. She would support me and advocate for what I wanted in court. She made me feel like she had time for me."*

- Youth feedback about an OCR attorney

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 FY23

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Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

OCR will successfully implement HB22-1038 and further infuse youth voice in the culture of OCR and related legal services.

Other Performance Goals

- Provide children a voice in the Colorado legal system through effective and efficient attorney services and advocacy.
- Optimize efficiencies in attorney practice 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.

## Implementation of HB22-1038

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OCR worked diligently to implement this transformative youth rights legislation in FY23. As a reminder, this bill changed the legal representation model for youth aged 12 and older in D&N proceedings, going from a best-interest of the child model to a client-directed model. In addition, the bill made children and youth a party to their D&N proceeding and specified that children and youth have a right to attend and fully participate in court. The bill was signed by Governor Polis in April of 2022 and included an implementation runway of about nine months, with an effective date of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. During that implementation period, OCR:

- Made comprehensive recommendations to the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court updating practice standards for GALs and CFY contained in [CJD 04-06](#). Those recommendations were vetted extensively with stakeholders and ultimately adopted and made effective January 9, 2023.

- Designed and launched enhancements to support the new law in CARES, OCR's Case Management and Billing System.
- Dedicated the first day of OCR's fall conference to HB22-1038 and required all contractors to attend, either in person or virtually. This training featured two supporters of the bill with lived experience, several national speakers, including an ethics expert from the ABA, and practitioners from states doing client-directed youth representation. OCR supported this mandatory training by compensating contractors utilizing Title IV-E funds.
- Provided additional webinars to support implementation focused on ethical issues, diminished capacity, and the new CJD requirements.
- Developed extensive practice supports such as a conflict flowchart, diminished capacity flowchart, motions related to the transition, notices, and engagement letters.
- Developed and/or updated youth resources.
- Delivered training around the state to a wide variety of professionals related to the new law.
- Hosted numerous office hours to staff questions and cases with attorneys related to the new law.
- Authored an article for the Colorado Lawyer, April 2023 edition, outlining the history of Colorado's commitment to legal representation for children and youth in the context of approving HB22-1038.

So far, implementation has been successful and relatively smooth. Attorneys have reported getting more information from their clients now that they have a more protective confidential relationship, and youth have also responded positively. One youth said:

*"I think the attorney decision is awesome because of the trust it gives the youth. For me, it feels like the attitude of my team has changed because of the influence I now have and it allows me to work more collaboratively on issues rather than pushing back on someone's else's decisions for me."*

## Engaging and Empowering Youth

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OCR's robust Engaging and Empowering Youth efforts continued throughout FY23. OCR conducted 12 youth survey events and collected 137 youth surveys. Additionally, OCR gathered youth feedback through 81 youth reference interviews about GALs/CFY. OCR created a new [youth page](#) to connect youth to the FYTP, a wide variety of youth resources, and methods to provide feedback. OCR also created a new "[Resources for Professionals](#)" page filled with articles and practical tools related to youth rights and interests.

### LEAP

In its second year, LEAP had 7 returning members and 6 new members. Through OCR collaborations with DYS, LEAP diversified by adding 4 members detained at DYS facilities. LEAP also selected and completed three projects: an emancipation checklist, a flyer with youth perspectives about DYS facilities and sentences, and ICWA resources. In addition to planning and co-facilitating LEAP meetings, LEAP members:

- Trained new GALs/CFY during OCR's Core Competencies I.
- Trained all GALs/CFY about youth rights to attend and fully participate in D&N hearings.
- Trained stakeholders about youth voice at the Colorado Mentoring Summit; Strengthening Families and Communities Summit, and the Colorado Convening on Children, Youth, and Families.
- Planned and executed events during Colorado Youth Awareness Week.
- Collected youth surveys and shared information about LEAP, FosterEd, and the FYTP at Grand Mesa DYS Center and the Celebration of Educational Excellence.
- Provided input about legislation, the voluntary services agreement used in FYTP proceedings, OCR's D&N Toolkit for Youth, and OCR's new attorney interview questions.
- Participated in the Colorado Child Welfare Codesign Steering Committee, as well as the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Multidisciplinary and Cross-Jurisdictional Training Project.
- Partnered with project Foster Power to train GALs/CFY about activities for children/youth in foster care.
- Testified at the Colorado State Capitol.

### Youth in Court

For years, OCR has worked to increase youth participation in court through training, resource creation, data sharing, and myth-busting. HB22-1038 changed the landscape by providing all children and youth with the right to attend and fully participate in their D&N proceedings. Early data is promising, showing that child and youth attendance has increased by 11.4 percentage points since the bill went into effect. OCR administered a state-wide survey to judicial officers, attorneys, and other professionals to assess current attitudes about youth court attendance and participation, barriers, and strategies. Survey results will inform FY24 efforts related to youth court attendance and participation. OCR continues to train attorneys, judicial officers, and other stakeholders on this topic and will present to a national audience at the NACC's September virtual conference, where it hopes to learn strategies and ideas from other states. OCR has also worked with Colorado's Juvenile Rules committee to propose a youth participation rule as part of its eventual rule package.

*She always told me it was my right to attend but also my choice because at times I felt uncomfortable and afraid of showing up in a courtroom, but she always let me have final deciding factors on whether or not I wanted to attend. She has always made sense of things for me that I had questions about or didn't understand.*

- Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

## 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, OCR attorneys must disclose 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 review process requires a review of the following data sources (those in bold only apply to the tri-annual renewal process):

- D&N Visit Report (to show compliance with the initial 30-day visit requirement in CJD 04-06)
- Attorney Discipline Report
- Judicial Officer Stakeholder Survey Results
- Training Verification Form
- Malpractice Insurance Form
- Outstanding Issues Form
- **Court Observation Summary**
- **Case Reference Summary**
- **Writing Sample**
- **One on One Interview**
- **Activity in Timeframe Report**
- **Youth Surveys**

*"The way she spoke to me I felt like it was person to person not client to attorney. She always made me feel very secure. I was never afraid to hide something from her because she easily built trust with me. Never felt that she didn't fight for me. She is actually an inspiration to me. I wanted to be an immigration attorney but now I want to be a GAL. I always think to myself I want to be someone like [my OCR attorney] where someone talks about me the way I talk about [her]."*

- Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

Each attorney is reviewed by a staff attorney who assesses any discrepancies between the data and established benchmarks. Attorneys falling outside the benchmarks are staffed by OCR to promote consistency and transparency in OCR contracting decisions. In FY23, OCR processed 233 verification and renewal applications and received 50 additional new applications. Additionally, OCR received and reviewed 347 Judicial Officer Surveys, interviewed 248 references, and conducted 266 court observations.

## 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 is a significant factor in OCR's ability to continually expand programming, provide attorney oversight, focus on contractor and stakeholder needs, and respond to unpredictable demands while remaining administratively lean.

The IS team’s expertise in systems design, data modeling, workflow efficiency, user experience, quality control, data analysis, and code languages, including Python, R, SQL/MySQL, VBA, JavaScript, and HTML/CSS, enables OCR to deploy flexible, custom, scalable solutions in-house. For large-scale projects, the team collaborates with external vendors for additional engineering support, leveraging mutual expertise and longstanding partnerships to accelerate OCR’s core priorities. High-tech solutions allow OCR to:

- Automate repetitive tasks to increase accuracy and lighten staff and contractors’ administrative workload.
- Connect huge volumes of data from a variety of sources to inform and streamline decision-making.
- Innovate new systems based on emergent needs and continually improve existing systems with OCR’s exact needs and strategic objectives at the forefront.

*"She's not out to get you and she is there every step of the way. She's good at communicating with you. We wouldn't have been doing as good as we are without her. She is making this a better situation. She also will call us out for messing up, she's strong and firm but also helpful. Cannot tell you how amazing it is to have such an amazing person on our team and caring about us."*

- Parent feedback about an OCR Attorney

#### CARES Case Management and Billing System

OCR’s proprietary online case management and billing system (“CARES”) was designed to support OCR attorneys, provide up-to-date budget analyses and projections, and generate the exact data and reports necessary for OCR’s oversight and accountability. CARES queries and reports allow OCR to conduct quarterly reviews of child counts for each attorney, 30-day initial visit reports, risk-based sampling of high-cost contractors/appointments for the quarter, and much more. An online CARES Help Center provides 24/7 user-friendly tutorials and a variety of detailed self-help articles, saving contractor and staff time. Help Center analytics tell the team which FAQs are consulted most, aiding decision-making about future improvements.

#### CARES Year in Review (FY23):

Active Users	<b>~550</b>
Activities logged by attorneys, CCs, and their staff	<b>669,233</b>
Case management notes entered	<b>344,468</b>
Attachments uploaded	<b>19,907</b>
Invoices generated/exported for state payment	<b>2,789</b>
Line items automatically compiled for review in above invoices	<b>808,700</b>
Help Center views (# of times an article was read)	<b>5,869</b>

The first half of FY23 saw significant CARES enhancements in preparation for HB22-1038 at minimal cost. The IS team first streamlined certain areas of the application to make it simpler in anticipation of the transition to CFY. Then, in December, attorneys began seeing one-month reminders of their youth at or near age 12. Starting in January, age-12 pop-ups also flag attorneys’ role changes and usher users through updates, auto-filling as much information as possible. Behind the scenes, the IS team wrote an intricate conditional logic hierarchy to handle the mid-case role change from GAL to CFY that *may* occur per youth depending on age, case type, case

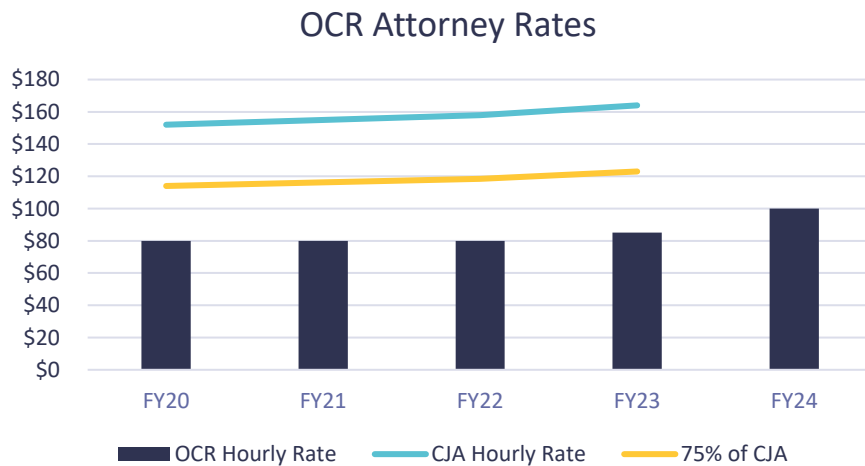
status, original attorney role, and more. The logic enforces data integrity and avoids any re-entry of user data despite significant changes to the CARES data model. Though the backend change was complex, the IS team prioritized an easy user experience to allow attorneys to focus on their real-world transition to CFY. The new logic is flexible and future-focused; OCR staff may update its settings when needed without re-coding the system’s backend.

### OCR Website

In FY23, the IS team oversaw a complete redesign of [OCR’s website](#). The modern and ADA-compliant site features a user-friendly design, simplified navigation, and improved content organization, making it faster and easier to access OCR’s many resources. The site launched on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and has hosted 1,800 visitors since going live.

## 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. OCR is immensely grateful to the Joint Budget Committee and the General Assembly for approving the FY23 requested rate increase, which brings the OCR contract attorney hourly rate to \$100/hour beginning July 1, 2023. Further, the passage of SB23-227 gives OCR a sustainable path to secure attorney compensation rates that are at least 75% of the rate set pursuant to the Federal “Criminal Justice Act Revision of 1986”, which sets attorney rates for indigent representation in federal court. With the increase to \$100/hour, OCR attorney rates are at 61% of the CJA rate.



### 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 FY23, OCR received 176 Attorney Satisfaction Surveys covering all 22 Judicial Districts. OCR has taken a variety of actions to respond to the results of the survey. For example, OCR is engaging in an attorney well-being program, launching a new policy to compensate attorneys by using Title IV-E



funds for up to 10 CLEs of in-person OCR-approved training, starting a second chair litigation support program, and expanding payment categories for the CC program.

To further these efforts, 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 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, 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.

*"[We were treated] kindly with respect and like humans. She was respectful when she was letting us know what needed improvement and supportive when she told us what we were doing right."*

*- Parent feedback about an OCR attorney*

### Attorney Supports

OCR provides a variety of litigation support to enhance attorney efficiency and keep attorneys and CCs current in relevant subject matter areas. These supports include:

- **Westlaw** - comprehensive legal research tool provided at no cost to the contractor.
- **Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID)** – comprehensive advocacy guide published in 2012, rewritten in 2018 and updated regularly.
- **Litigation Toolkit** – contains pleadings, social science resources, and practice tools. By the end of FY23, the toolkit contained 165 pleadings and 179 resources/tools.
- **Litigation Support List** – attorneys with subject matter expertise who are approved to consult on cases and assist in high-quality legal representation.
- **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 FY23, OCR attorneys sent 812 emails via the listserv.
- **Quarterly Newsletters** - provides up-to-date information on case law updates, legislative updates, training announcements, attorney shout-outs, and more.

In FY23, OCR updated the look and feel of its Newsletter (case law and other key updates) and Training Tuesdays (notices of relevant upcoming training) email bulletins. Their consolidated design features OCR's new logo and website branding, plus personalized subject lines, embedded navigation, and other technology to provide a faster, streamlined read and elevate key content. Though the changes are recent, newsletter readership has already increased approximately 20%.

## Case Consultant (CC) Program

Multidisciplinary law practice is a well-accepted best practice that 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 expertise to complement the attorney’s expertise, and can enhance attorney contact with children/youth and other parties. OCR allows for two levels of professionals to fulfill this role. 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). OCR expanded its CC contracts in FY23 and now contracts directly with 17 CCs who are available state-wide. To date, OCR CCs have provided assistance in over 500 cases covering 18 judicial districts.

*"She cared for us and made sure we knew we had our choices. She always asked us what we wanted, really listened to us and didn't just do what she thought was best. [She also talked to me about] the resources I would have in the foster system as a 17 year old about to be 18, and if I decided to live on my own what programs there were to help, and funding for school if I decided to go."*

- Youth feedback about an OCR attorney

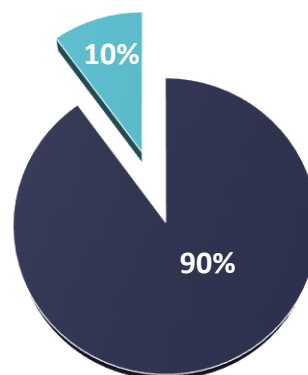
## OCR Allocation

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 the contractor’s 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 allocation amount. In FY23, OCR used 90% of its expended funds for attorney services (including the CAC line item) and only 10% for administration. OCR expended \$29,253,817 (including grant funding received by OCR) to provide high-quality and accessible training. The general assembly passed \$1,750,000 through OCR’s budget to Colorado CASA for distribution to local CASA programs. In total, OCR used 86.1% of its appropriation and reverted \$3,595,681 million to the general fund.

OCR’s Operations Team continues to process invoices and pay contractors with great efficiency. In FY23, OCR staff processed 2,853 invoices through CARES and an additional 789 non-CARES payments while averaging 6.7 days from invoice submission to upload in the state financial system for payment.

FY 23 Administrative Expenditures  
(through 6/30/23)

- Legal services for children/youth
- Admin. costs



## Title IV-E Funding

OCR is authorized to use IV-E funding to enhance attorney services and utilized \$984,757 in FY23 to increase support of multidisciplinary law practice by contracting with additional CCs, to add necessary staff that can provide increased youth justice support, and to support mandatory training. OCR continues to identify and implement opportunities to use these dollars to enhance the legal representation of children and youth, and in FY23, strategically planned the next phase of its IV-E enhancements to support increased use of CCs, reimburse contract attorneys for the time completing OCR training requirements, and provide holistic legal representation on civil matters related to attorneys' appointed cases.

## Accessible State-Wide Training

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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 diversity, equity, and inclusion specific training. To meet this requirement, OCR has developed a learning and practice environment that infuses diversity, equity, and inclusion principles throughout and focuses on four overarching core competencies as the foundation of high-quality representation:

- Ethics/Role of the GAL, CLR, or CFY
- Substantive Knowledge
  - Federal and state law
  - Social science and cultural competency
- Skills
  - Out of court advocacy
  - In-court advocacy
  - Effective engagement with youth and professionals
  - Conducting a meaningful independent investigation
  - Law Practice Management

*"[I] was usually happy anytime I got to see her or talk to her. She supported me so much and was with me for 3yrs. ... I wouldn't trade her for anything. best GAL I could ask for, she was amazing."*

- Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney

To support this learning and practice environment, OCR offers periodic staffings by case type (e.g., FYTP, youth justice, appellate litigation support, CLR) 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 legislation

In FY23, the training priorities were:

- Client-directed representation
- Justice for youth
- Litigation practice

OCR often delivers training when requested by judicial districts, state and national organizations, and other professionals. In FY23, OCR provided a substantial number of hours of training to a wide variety of stakeholders in child welfare regarding HB23-1038. OCR does not apply for each of these trainings to receive CLE credit, and the total number of hours provided is not formally tracked. However, in FY23, OCR provided 91 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
- Annual Case Law & Legislative Update
- Back to School 2022: School Discipline Issues and New Federal Guidance Update
- Practice Standards for CFY & the Revised Chief Justice Directive 04-06
- Diminished Capacity & the Appointment of a Guardian ad Litem
- RAEs: What Are They and How Can They Help?
- Ethics & Sibling Conflicts
- Client-Directed Representation: How Stakeholders Can Support Effective Implementation
- Roles & Responsibilities of Case Consultants in Client-Directed Representation
- Addressing Safety in Client-Directed Representation
- New Colorado Statute Providing Children/Youth with D&N Cases the Right to Attend and Fully Participate in their Court Hearings: The Why, What, and How
- Educational Advocacy: Preparing for the End of School Year Discipline and Mental Health Rush
- Direct File & Transfer 2-day Training
- HB22-1038: Counsel for Youth & Appeals
- Persuasion Through Storytelling
- OCR Spring Conference
- Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Becoming a Truly Askable Adult
- Multidisciplinary Appellate Training

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 FY23, OCR has a total of 250 current and up-to-date hours of 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 9 scholarships to the National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference and 5 scholarships to the Colorado Bar Association 2023 Appellate Practice Update.

To support our contractors in obtaining essential and timely information about the transition to client-directed representation, OCR compensated approximately 230 contractors to attend the 2022 Fall Conference, which was focused on the new counsel for youth attorney role. This was a necessary investment in OCR attorney's professional development, effective implementation of HB23-1038, and part of OCR's FY23 WIG. OCR was able to use IV-E Funding for this important enhancement of high-quality legal representation in Colorado.

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

- 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, stages of a juvenile delinquency case

*"She was the only one who truly listened to my granddaughter. She made her feel heard. She was her voice...My grandson has speech issues and she figured out a way to communicate with him so that was really impressive... She was a huge advocate for both of the kids. I think the situation might have been different if we didn't have her in the case."*

*-Caregiver feedback about an OCR Attorney*

## CASA Overview and Update

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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 18 of the 22 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 volunteers concentrate their service on one case at a time, and typically a volunteer must commit to 18 months of service (though many volunteers serve throughout the life of a case). 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; volunteers are non-attorney advocates who provide written reports to the court and parties, establish supportive relationships with children, youth, parents, kin, and placements. 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 FY23, 1,985 citizens volunteered as CASAs in 2,190 D&N cases, serving 3,791 children and youth.

## Conclusion

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As previously mentioned, all the work OCR performed in FY23 was recently recognized by the National Association of Counsel for Children, who awarded OCR with the Outstanding Children's Law Office of the Year Award. OCR is incredibly proud of its staff and the hard-working attorneys who represent children and youth across the state in this meaningful and difficult area of the law.

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*"Amazing GAL. I trust her fully. She understands what I'm going through and helps me process all the things that have happened. Anytime that I have been in a bad spot with my past addiction or living situation, she would provide resources and helped me get back on the right track. She has done everything in her power to make sure my head is on straight... She went above and beyond to advocate for me even though I am pretty good at advocating for myself."*

*– Youth feedback about an OCR Attorney*

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## Appendix A

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### 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.

**Supreme Court Family Issues Committee and Other Professionals Standing Subcommittee:** This committee was established by the Supreme Court as a result of the recommendations of the Colorado Supreme Court Commission on Families. OCR's Executive Director 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)

**Delivery of Child Welfare Services Taskforce:** This taskforce was created through SB18-254 to make recommendations regarding 12 areas of child welfare service, including implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). OCR's Executive Director is a member of the taskforce.

**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.

**Institutional Assessment Work Group:** This group drafted recommended revisions to CDHS regulations addressing assessments of referrals of child abuse occurring in public or private facilities that provide childcare out of the home, supervision, or maintenance. 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 Youth Empowerment Attorney is a member.

**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.

**Program Improvement Plan Implementation Team/Continuous Quality Improvement (PIPIT/CQI):** Brings county and state child welfare practitioners together to examine state and county performance on key child welfare outcome indicators identified by the federal government on Colorado's PIP; identify strengths, opportunities, and strategies; and explore areas that are in need of further research. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney attends.

**CDHS Persons Responsible for Abuse and Neglect (PRANS) Under 18 Workgroup:** Founded findings of child abuse and neglect become part of a person's permanent record, which can create long-term negative consequences such as barriers to employment. This multidisciplinary work group is reviewing the Colorado Department of Human Services regulations and processes related to child abuse and neglect findings of children/youth aged less than 18 and making recommendations for change. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney participates in the group.

**CDHS Training Steering Committee Subgroup:** This is a time-limited state-wide subgroup of the CDHS Training Steering Committee to assess and develop strategies and resources for working collaboratively with other professionals. OCR's Training Director serves on this subcommittee.

**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.



**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 Executive Director, who serves as an executive member. OCR's Youth Empowerment Attorney serves as a non-executive member.

OCR staff also serve on the following CIP groups:

**CIP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup:** Created to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in all dependency and neglect cases by devising a programmatic strategy to address the overrepresentation of people of color and other groups of individuals facing discrimination in the child welfare system. The CIP DEI Workgroup's strategy involves infusing anti-racism tactics throughout the CIP program and addressing implicit and explicit bias by those working within the child welfare system. OCR's Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney serves as a non-executive member, as does an OCR LEAP member.

**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.

**Best Practice Court Team Redesign Workgroup:** OCR's Training Director is a non-executive member.

**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 Deputy Director serves on the advisory committee.

**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 Deputy Director sat on the Council in FY2022, and OCR's new Youth Justice Attorney has been appointed going forward.

**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 Public Policy Committee:** OCR Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is a member of the CASA Public Policy 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.” 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; 1038/Counsel for Youth; Visions; 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 CC Coordinator is a member of the taskforce.

**High Quality Parenting Time Taskforce (HB21-1101):** The HQPTTF was created to research and review best practices in family time and make recommendations for family time improvement in Colorado. OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is a member of the Steering Committee and a voting member of the taskforce.

**Domestic Abuse Statutory Definition Taskforce (HB21-1099):** The taskforce will work to determine a recommended definition of domestic abuse to be included in the Children's Code and will review proposed language concerning best practices and training regarding domestic abuse for child welfare. OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is an appointed 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.

**Pre-Adolescent Services Task Force (HB22-1131):** The task force, which convened between August 2022 and January 2023, examined potential gaps in services for juveniles who are 10-12 years of age, should the minimum age of prosecution of juveniles increase from 10 to 13. The task force endeavored to identify how services can be delivered outside of the juvenile justice system and make recommendations for funding those services. OCR's Youth Justice Attorney was an appointed member of the task force.

**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 the 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.

**Children's Justice Act Taskforce Subcommittee:** This is a time-limited taskforce funded by the Children's Justice Act to develop a state-wide Parent Toolkit for D&N cases that can be used state-wide. OCR's Training Director serves on this subcommittee.

**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:** This workgroup creates tools and provides expertise to improve the quality of legal representation for families across the country. Research of parent representation programs has shown that interdisciplinary legal teams that are well-trained, fairly compensated, and have reasonable caseloads help families reunify more quickly without compromising child safety. One of the tools this group is working on is an anti-racist toolkit. OCR’s CC Coordinator participates in the subcommittee.

**FJI Appellate Advocacy Subcommittee:** Offers trial and appellate attorney guidance about what to look for in choosing the best cases to take on appeal, creating an Appellate How-to Guide, and creating talking points for lawyers to use when describing the appellate process to clients. In addition, the Subcommittee will provide an introduction that covers strategies for building an effective appellate practice. OCR’s Appellate and Affirmative Litigation Strategies Attorney participates in this group.

**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.

**JCAMP:** The Capacity Building Center for Courts, through a project funded by the Children's Bureau, worked to create national Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP). OCR was selected to be on the expert advisor group, which concluded its work in October 2022. OCR’s Deputy Director served as an expert advisor.