
GAL and Case Consultant Safety Resources

OCR Common FAQs & Suggestions

- When should you conflict off a case?
 - Generally, OCR advises that attorneys and case consultants do not conflict off cases after an initial threat. The individual making the threat will likely continue their threatening behavior with a new attorney or case consultant. However, attorney and case consultant safety always comes first, and conflict decisions should consider many factors.
 - OCR Staff Attorney District Liaisons (<https://coloradochildrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OCR-Judicial-District-Liaison-Map.pdf>) and OCR's Case Consultant Coordinator are always available to staff individual cases. Please reach out with any questions.
- Is contempt a good option?
 - Contempt has not been shown to be effective in changing behavior and may be more likely to escalate things.
 - However, OCR heard that at least one GAL had success in getting a threatening individual to refrain from engaging in threatening behavior just by filing a contempt motion. The likelihood of the success of a contempt motion likely depends on the mental health of the threatening individual, the seriousness of threat, and other factors.
- Some attorneys have expressed concern that post-threat actions may be seen as retribution or “soft pedals”, or that the attorney is “no longer objective” because of the threat.
 - OCR has not seen this concern reflected in practice.
- OCR trusts your judgement. If you do not feel safe doing a home visit or if safety concerns are impeding your ability to comply with the CJD independent investigation requirements, please reach out to your staff attorney district liaison.

Engagement with Law Enforcement/Court/Other Entities

- Request patrol around your home from local law enforcement. Some law enforcement agencies will offer a walkthrough of your house and general safety tips.
- File threats with organizations such as DHS and law enforcement.
- Consider restraining orders, depending on the type and severity of threatening behaviors.
- Considering filing a motion for no contact order.
- Reach out to your local sheriff's department and request a civil assist for home visits.

Online Privacy

- Keep your social media accounts private. Be aware of social media policies and what others can find out about you. For example, others may be able to see the accounts you follow such as school and event pages.
- Be thoughtful about where you post and display personal pictures.

- Read *Protecting Your Personal Privacy: A Self-Help Guide for Judges and Their Families*, a publication by the Chicago Bar Association and the John Marshall School of Law (see separate attachment).
- Read *Protecting Your Identity: Cyber Tips – Do’s and Don’ts*. (see separate attachment)
- Blur your house photo on Google Maps:
 - Go to Google Maps and type in your address.
 - Bring up the street view of your property.
 - Click on “report a problem” located at the bottom right-hand corner of the screen.
 - You will get a page labeled “report inappropriate street view”.
 - Adjust the image so your house is inside the red box.
 - Complete the form.
 - Type the verification code at the bottom of the page into the box provided and click submit.
 - Check back in a few days to see if the image has been blurred.
- Use a business address other than your home address for your firm. Use this address with the Secretary of State, the Colorado Bar Association, and with OCR for the OCR appointment lists.
 - Some UPS locations will offer a PO Box that appears to be a physical address with a suite number, for those entities that do not allow a “PO Box” to be listed as a public address.
- You may be able to “seal” your land property records to hide your home address. Check with the appropriate county department for your county.

General Safety Tips

- Personal awareness
 - Be aware of your surroundings. Avoid getting distracted by your phone.
 - Carry a flashlight.
 - Take a self-defense course.
 - If something feels uncomfortable, trust that feeling and leave.
 - Keep your phone fully charged and carry a car or external phone charger.
 - In rural areas with lack of cell service, consider a satellite phone. Garmin inReach is a satellite communication device.
 - Have a forceful and strong presence, practice outward confidence. Be aware of your own body language.
 - Use code words with kids that only you, family and trusted people you know.
 - Let someone know where you are. Set time for someone to check in with you.
 - Don’t leave mail or other personal items visible in your vehicle.
 - Install a car dashboard camera
- Change your routine
 - Drive different routes to and from work.
 - Change your running routine.
 - Go to different stores.
- Precautions at home
 - Leave lights on around your house to avoid coming home at dark.

- Trim bushes and yard foliage that could be a good hiding are.
- Do not share your house keys or codes with others.
- Install an alarm system, camera system, motion sensors, peephole for viewing visitors, and/or visual/audio doorbells.
- Do not open your door for individuals you do not know.
- Fully close and lock doors, windows, blinds, and curtains.
- Lock yard gates.
- Reinforce doors and windows. See *How to Secure Your Front Door*:
<https://youtu.be/bC8uEVoOOfk>
- Conducting Home Visits
 - Before home visits:
 - Ask the family to restrain dogs.
 - Familiarize yourself with the neighborhood before the visit (goggle map views etc).
 - During home visits:
 - Remain where you have a line of sight with a door.
 - Do not park in driveways. Parking further away gives you time to view and assess the house and yard as you approach.
 - Be aware of where you are in the room, including entrances and exists to/from the room.
 - Reach out to your local sheriff's department and request a civil assist for home visits.
- Meetings and Office
 - Consider scheduling meetings to take place in secure buildings where the parties are required to go through metal detectors.
 - Bring another party with you to the meeting or visit (such as a CC or the caseworker).
 - Ask for an escort in and out of court from the sheriff deputies.

Community Training Resources

- CDHS training available to OCR GALs and Counsel. <https://learning.coloradocwts.com/> to view a list of trainings. Potentially helpful training may include the following:
 - *Fear Less: Protecting Yourself in the Field*
 - *De-escalation training*
 - *Nonverbal Precursors to Violence*
 - *Protecting Professional Resiliency*
 - *Worker Safety: Protecting Those Serving Others, and*
 - *Empowering Black Staff: Creating and Supporting Safety and Wellness for Black Workers.*
- National Criminal Justice Training Center
 - Browse all training at: <https://ncjtc.fvtc.edu/search-results?Content=Training>
 - [Verbal De-escalation and Conflict Resolution](#) (providing December 2021 and March 2022 dates)
 - [Defensive Tactics and Personal Safety Training](#)

- [Crisis Intervention De-escalation Steps](#) (for law enforcement, but applicable to many)

Additional Resources

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2002). *Safety first: Dealing with the daily challenges of child welfare*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/safety-first-dealing-with-the-daily-challenges-of-child-welfare/>

National Association of Social Workers. (2020). *Guidelines for social worker safety in the workplace*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=6OEdoMjcNC0%3d&portalid=0>

Capacity Building Center for the Courts:
<https://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/capacity/Blob/115592.pdf?r=1&rpp=10&upp=0&w=+NATIVE%28%27recno=115592%27%29&m=1>