



Colorado Office of the Child's Representative

2021 Annual Conference Youth Have a Voice, Youth Have a Choice August 13, 2021 / Zoom

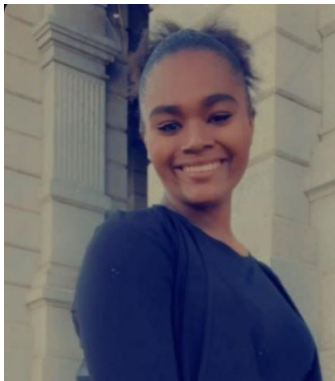
1. **Engaging & Empowering Youth: Meaningful Contact, Youth Court Attendance and Participation, and GAL/Counsel Representation**

Lindsay Alexandria Saunders-Velez, OCR's Lived Experts Action Panel

Elizabeth Arrieta, OCR's Lived Experts Action Panel

Moderator: Cara Nord, OCR Staff Attorney

This session will begin with powerful presentations by two extraordinary members of OCR's inaugural young adults council. Afterwards, three strategies for engaging and empowering youth – meaningful contact, court attendance and participation, and representation - will be explored through CJD requirements, youth-centered data, and panel discussions with our two extraordinary young adult council members.



Lindsay Alexandria Saunders-Velez is a former foster child and youth from the Division of Youth Services. She is now the Founder and Senior Executive Director of the Colorado Justice Advocacy Network, an organization that aims to provides equal to access to justice to individuals involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, safeguard the rights and liberties of such individuals, and resolve matters in a timely and efficient manner. Lindsay also serves as a member of the Young Adults Council of the Office of the Child's Representative and a stakeholder

group through the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman. She is currently working towards a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Metropolitan State University Denver and has a long-term goal of earning a Juris Doctorate.



Elizabeth Arrieta is a member of OCR's Council. She chose to apply for OCR's Council because she has experienced her entire teen life in the foster care system. Being part of this council is important to her because she can speak about changes needed to happen to better the lives of youth and children

in the foster care system. As of today, she works at a local King Soopers and goes to

college studying for a major in political science. Elizabeth's lifelong dream goal is to become an immigration attorney one day.

Cara Nord is a staff attorney with the Office of the Child's Representative. Cara's interest in children's issues began over 20 years ago when she wrote an original oratory about child abuse for her junior high forensics team. After earning a Bachelor of Arts *magna cum laude* in American Politics and Philosophy/Prelaw, Cara taught fourth grade in Washington, D.C. through Teach for America. Her teaching experiences afforded her the opportunity to attend law school on a full-tuition public interest scholarship. During law school, Cara interned at a public defender's office where she represented children in At-Risk Youth (ARY) and Child in Need of Services (CHINS) proceedings, interned with TeamChild, and completed Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) training. After graduating from law school *summa cum laude*, Cara clerked for the Washington State Supreme Court and volunteered as a Big Sister. She then spent over 10 years litigating child welfare trials and appeals as an Assistant Attorney General in Washington State and as an Assistant County Attorney in Colorado. Cara joined OCR in February 2017. She enjoys legal research and writing, facilitating interactive trainings, and addressing race/class disparities.

2. *A Call to Action to End the Unjust, Unnecessary, and Disproportionate Removal of Black Children From Their Families*

Shereen A. White, Senior Staff Attorney, Children's Rights, Inc.

The history of racism in child welfare systems is long and unforgivable and yet, it continues. Black families are subjected to unjust, unnecessary, and disproportionate surveillance and removal of their children—imposing profound, lifelong trauma. A discussion about the history of the system and some federal child welfare legislation rooted in racism continues to be urgent. This session will provide national data about disproportionality at different stages of the front end of the child welfare system and address the harm and continued devaluing and destruction of Black families entangled with the child welfare system. This is a Call to Action to disrupt, rather than re-enforce, the policies and practices that perpetuate institutional racism.

Shereen A. White joined Children's Rights in 2019 and recently transitioned from a Senior Staff Attorney to lead Children's Rights advocacy work, as the Director of Advocacy & Policy. Prior to joining Children's Rights, Ms. White spent the duration of her legal career in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, including as an Assistant General Counsel for The School District of Philadelphia, primarily representing the district in special education matters and a Child Advocate Attorney in the Child Advocacy Unit of the Defender Association of Philadelphia, where she represented children involved in the child welfare system.

3. Foster Youth Transition Program

Sheri Danz, OCR Deputy Director

Ashley Chase, OCR Staff Attorney & Legislative Liaison

Join us for a breakout session centered around the newly enacted HB21-1094 which establishes the Foster Youth Transition Program and changes the way in which we serve transition-age youth in the child welfare system in Colorado. The session will begin with an overview of the new law and then detail the services and supports provided within the program. We will review what makes a youth eligible, important definition, and then delve into both the changes to Article 3 and the additions to Article 7. We will include the changes around client-directed representation and how the Rules of Professional Conduct apply, specifically discussing Rule 1.4 and 1.7. After, we will lead a discussion regarding issues that have arisen since the law was enacted to clarify some areas of the law and problem-solve others. Throughout we will add practice tips and highlight resources for attorneys.

Sheri Danz's legal advocacy on behalf of children and youth includes representing adolescents and young adults in child welfare and other civil matters as a Skadden Fellow/staff attorney at the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago; representing juveniles in delinquency proceedings as a staff attorney at the Colorado State Public Defender's Office; and representing youth in public benefits, child welfare, and protective order proceedings as a legal intern at the Door's Legal Services Program, a multidisciplinary youth services center in New York City. Ms. Danz has also worked on issues regarding parents' counsel at the Office of the State Court Administrator in Colorado and served as a law clerk to the Hon. Gene Carter, United States District Court Judge for the District of Maine. Prior to law school, Ms. Danz taught special education in rural North Carolina through the Teach for America Program. Sheri Danz is a graduate of New York University School of Law, where she received a Root-Tilden-Kern public interest scholarship and served as a member of the New York University Law Review.

Ashley Chase began her career in child welfare law while attending the University of Colorado School of Law with her participation in the Juvenile Law Clinic where she was awarded the CU Law pro bono service award (2006/07) and the Juvenile Law Clinic Award (2007). After completing an externship with the Honorable J. Robert Lowenbach in the 19th Judicial District, Ashley began working in Weld County in the areas of family law and as a Guardian ad Litem. During her 10 years in Weld County, Ashley participated in all aspects of litigation and appeals. She worked in the problem-solving court (Family Treatment Court) and was a member of the 19th Judicial District Best Practices Team. In 2010 she was awarded the Jim Covino Advocate of the Year award from the Office of the Child's Representative and in 2017 she was a member of the Best Practices Team of the Year. Ashley has presented and taught across the state in the field of Child Welfare Law and

continues to follow her passion as the Staff Attorney and Legislative Liaison at OCR. Ashley received her B.A. degree from the University of Northern Colorado in the field of Advertising Media and Public Relations in 2000. She worked in Major League Soccer for four years prior to attending the University of Colorado School of Law and receiving her Juris Doctorate in 2007.

4. *Engaging with Parents Through Relational Advocacy*

Rick Barinbaum, LMSW, Child Advocacy Law Clinic, University of Michigan
Melissa Jensen, Esq., Guardian ad litem

This didactic presentation focuses on the work of GALs through relationship building. The training will explore the opportunities and challenges for GAL's engaging with parents and will provide guiding principles and skills that can help develop relationships while fostering a holistic view of a family.

Rick Barinbaum, LMSW, is a clinical social worker and educator, who focuses on interdisciplinary work to help strengthen vulnerable families and keep them intact. Rick has two decades of experience including residential treatment, preventive services, and interdisciplinary legal advocacy. Rick worked for 11 years at the Center for Family Representation in New York City, an interdisciplinary child welfare legal advocacy organization, where he served as staff social worker, supervisor, and co-director before moving to Michigan in 2018. Rick precepts and teaches a practice seminar for social work students at the University of Michigan's Student Run Free Clinic, co-teaches at the Child Advocacy Law Clinic (CALC), and supervises MSW interns across interdisciplinary settings. Rick also works with the Michigan State Court Administrative Office's Court Improvement Program to build multi-disciplinary pre- and post-petition advocacy programs, and consults with a multidisciplinary immigration advocacy organization that represents women and girls fleeing gender-based violence. Rick strives to help emerging and current practitioners develop practice routines that foster teamwork and resilience, embrace competing tensions, operationalize trauma-informed practices, and situate micro work within a macro context.

Mel Jensen is one half of Jensen Davis Law in Larimer County where she primarily serves as a Guardian ad Litem for children and adults. Over the last year Mel has chaired the multi-disciplinary team sub-committee in the 8th and has focused on exploring ways to effectively engage with parents throughout a case to support reunification that serves the best interests of children.

5. *Appellate Hot Topics: Jurisdictional Issues, Current Trends & Tips for Avoiding Appellate Pitfalls*

Josi McCauley, Esq., Guardian ad litem, OCR Litigation Support

Gina Bischofs, Esq., Guardian ad litem, OCR Litigation Support

This session will cover appellate hot topics including recent appellate statistics and jurisdictional issues (including UCCJEA and the recent S.A.G. opinion by the Colorado Supreme Court). Appellate attorneys Josi McCauley and Gina Bischofs will discuss the most common issues the Litigation Support Team is seeing on appeal, in addition to offering best practice tips for avoiding appellate pitfalls.

Josi McCauley began working as a Guardian ad Litem in 2006 in dependency and neglect, delinquency, and probate matters, in addition to acting as a child's legal representative in domestic relations cases. She has served as the 8th Judicial District Juvenile Recovery Court Guardian ad Litem. Josi is a current member of OCR's Litigation Support Team specializing in appeals and providing assistance with litigation strategy to other Guardians ad Litem. Josi is certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist and is the Juvenile Law Section Representative on her local bench/bar committee.

Gina Bischofs has been practicing law for over 30 years primarily representing respondent parents and children in dependency and neglect cases at the trial court level. She now handles only appeals in child welfare and serves on the Litigation Support Team for OCR.

6. *LGBTQIA+ Youth: What You Need to Know*

Meryl Franklin, MA, LCSW, Director of Youth Services, Center on Colfax-Rainbow Alley

Em Moratto, Manager of Youth Services, Center on Colfax-Rainbow Alley

This session is an introduction to queer identities, legal protections, and practical suggestions for understanding and supporting LGBTQIA+ youth. We will review pronoun etiquette, explain intersectionality, and give context to the importance of learning more about the LGBTQIA+ community. The session will consist of two parts: a short PowerPoint presentation and a conversation between the audience and presenters. Everybody is welcome, regardless of their level of experience or knowledge.

Meryl Franklin, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker with extensive training and experience utilizing trauma-focused evidence-based practices utilizing a harm-reduction and anti-racist approach. For the last few years, she has worked as a trauma therapist working with individuals and families of all ages, helping them understand, process, and heal from their traumas. She currently serves as the Director of Youth Services at the Center on Colfax in Denver, where she runs programming to support LGBTQ+ youth.

Em Moratto is the Manager of Youth Services at Rainbow Alley. Prior to coming to Denver, she taught elementary special education in Memphis, TN, where she also volunteered with OUTMemphis, one of the only LGBTQIA+ organizations in the Mid-South. Once in Denver, Em started her master's degree with the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver. She has done clinical and macro social work and co-created outofyershell.com, a website that provides resources and supports for trans & non-binary youth, their loved-ones, and providers (schools, doctors, mental health folx, etc.).

7. *Families Over Facilities: Ending the Use of Harmful and Unnecessary Institutions and Other Group Facilities in Child Welfare Systems*

Ira Lustbader, Chief Program Officer, Children's Rights, Inc.

The time to end the unnecessary institutionalization of children in our child welfare system is now: the urgency of our national reckoning on racial justice, dangers of COVID-19, new federal legislation, and continued reports of shocking conditions demand action. This session presents the harms, economic costs and legal rights implicated by the unnecessary use of congregate care, as well as practical solutions for change. Attendees will learn about Children's Rights' report, *Families Over Facilities: Ending the Use of Harmful and Unnecessary Institutions and Other Group Facilities in Child Welfare Systems*, and how they can draw upon the report to advocate for placing children with families over facilities.

Ira Lustbader is Chief Program Officer at the national non-profit Children's Rights (www.childrensrights.org), where he directs CR's national program of civil rights litigation and advocacy campaigns. With active reform campaigns in over fifteen states, CR combines deep partnerships, grassroots case-building, advocacy, strategic impact litigation, negotiation, and policy expertise, to hold government systems accountable to the children that depend on them.

8. *Colorado Case Law & Legislative Update*

Sheri Danz, OCR Deputy Director

Ashley Chase, OCR Staff Attorney & Legislative Liaison

This session will cover recent case law and new legislation impacting GAL practice.

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Danz has also worked on issues regarding parents' counsel at the Office of the State Court Administrator in Colorado and served as a law clerk to the Hon. Gene Carter, United States District Court Judge for the District of Maine. Prior to law school, Ms. Danz taught special education in rural North Carolina through the Teach for America Program. Sheri Danz is a graduate of New York University School of Law, where she received a Root-Tilden-Kern public interest scholarship and served as a member of the New York University Law Review.

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