



Colorado Office of the Child's Representative

Report to the General Assembly for Fiscal Year 2021

September 2021

OCR Mission

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.

OCR Vision

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

OCR Values

Accountability: Colorado's children, attorneys, families, and communities can count on OCR to ensure that each decision we make and action we take advances our mission in a fair, 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 and honesty. 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 for Fiscal Year 2021

The past fiscal year has once again been a year marked by uncertainty and impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and yet has been a year of productivity and transformation. OCR finalized and released the [Engaging and Empowering Youth](#) paper and [Executive Summary](#), showcasing over 300 youth surveys and data from youth focus groups, court observations and case management/billing data. Recommendations from the paper ground OCR's work for the year and into the future in the importance of youth voice.

Youth voice and youth choice was a key component to the OCR's work on HB21-1094 which established the Foster Youth Transition Program (FYTP) and a more youth-driven and empowering way to serve emerging adults in the child welfare system. The FYTP was signed into law by Governor Polis on June 25, 2021 and went into effect immediately; changing the way in which OCR attorneys represent youth aged 18-21.

OCR continued other reform and system change efforts with its ongoing participation in the Family First Prevention Services Act ("Family First") Implementation Team and workgroups, on committees related to juvenile justice reform, with the Court Improvement Program and numerous other committees and workgroups.

Meanwhile, the staff at the OCR continued to work from home and provide support to over 265 attorneys across the state as they navigated the changing COVID-19 impacts both to attorney practice and safety but also to the children, youth and families OCR attorneys work with on a daily basis. OCR continued to provide guidance, resources, and training, as well as hosting ongoing townhall meetings with contractors.

OCR was able to complete the work necessary to start drawing down Title IV-E funds after months of work on the MOU, SOW and data sharing agreements. These funds will be used to enhance attorney services in a myriad of ways, including vital support for OCR's Case Consultant (CC) program. In FY21, the OCR contracted with three CCs to provide multidisciplinary support to attorneys in solo practice or small firms, allowing use of CCs on a case-by-case basis. The program has been successful and the OCR contracted with an additional five CCs towards the end of the fiscal year, expanding availability in some rural areas and areas with high volume.

Continued progress was made in regard to the OCR's important Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work, including changing our training requirements for contractors to include 2 credits of DEI specific training, integrating DEI principles into our training program year-round and engaging with the Equity Project to provide training and an organizational assessment. The organizational assessment began with a state-wide survey and will continue with 1-1 stakeholder interviews, a series of focus groups and review of internal data. This analysis will guide the direction of OCR's ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Table of Contents

OCR Mission 1

Highlights for Fiscal Year 2021 2

Board of Directors 4

OCR Staff..... 5

Agency Overview..... 6

OCR Performance Goals..... 8

 Goal 1: Provide children a voice in the Colorado legal system through effective attorney services and advocacy..... 8

 Engaging and Empowering Youth 9

 Attorney Qualifications and Standards..... 11

 Oversight and Evaluation of Attorney Practice 12

 Fair and Reasonable Compensation 13

 Goal 2: Optimize efficiencies in attorney practice and billing..... 14

 Manage Appropriations..... 14

 Overview of the OCR Budget 15

 Title IV-E Funding 16

 Maximize use and effectiveness of OCR’s on-line case management and billing system ... 16

 Provide Litigation Support 17

 Case Consultant (CC) Program..... 18

 Goal 3: Ensure attorneys and case consultants remain current in state and federal law and regulations, social science research, best practices in diversity and inclusion and evidence-based services. 19

CASA Overview and Update..... 21

Looking Ahead..... 22

Appendix A..... 23

 OCR Legislative Review 23

Appendix B..... 26

 OCR Committee Work..... 26

Board of Directors

The Colorado Supreme Court appoints the OCR's nine-member board (Board) in accordance with C.R.S. § 13-91-104(2) which requires Board membership to include 3 attorneys with experience representing children as Guardians *ad litem* or as legal representatives of children, 3 members who are not attorneys but have experience advocating for children in the court system and 3 citizens. No more than 5 members from one political party may serve, and each of the 7 congressional districts must be represented on the Board. The Board serves without compensation and advises the OCR's Executive Director regarding fiscal matters, policy and funding decisions. The OCR was fortunate to have a diverse and experienced Board in FY21 as follows:

Barbara Shaklee (Chair)

Chair, Democrat, First Congressional District, *Retired Denver City Attorney Human Services Section Director, Attorney*

Mark Ferrandino

Democrat, First Congressional District, *Chief Financial Officer, Denver Public Schools, Citizen*

Don Moseley

Democrat, Seventh Congressional District, *Executive Director of Ralston House, Advocate*

Kelvin Nicholson

Republican, First Congressional District, *Psychotherapist and Former Foster Parent, Citizen*

Gwen Schooley

Independent, Fourth Congressional District, *Executive Director, A Kids Place/CASA Program and Child Advocacy Center, Advocate*

Maria Valdez

Independent, Sixth Congressional District, *GAL Attorney in Arapahoe County, Attorney*

Mary Ann Liston (term ended 9/20/20)

Republican, Fifth Congressional District, *Retired Guardian ad Litem, Attorney*

Marc Winokur

Democrat, Second Congressional District, *Director, Social Work Research Center of CSU, Advocate*

Jean White

Republican, Third Congressional District, *former Colorado Senator, Citizen*

Victoria Shuler (non-voting Youth Advisory member)

Although not statutorily required, the Board includes a valued non-voting youth advisory member. Victoria has lived experience and received GAL services as a minor. She is currently the Denver Director of Fostering Great Ideas.

OCR Staff

OCR currently employs the following 13 people in the Denver Executive Office, located in the Ralph Carr Judicial Center at 1300 Broadway, Suite 320, Denver, CO 80203, for a total of 14 FTE (with 1 vacancy):

Executive Team

Chris Henderson
Executive Director

Sheri Danz
Deputy Director

Mark Teska
Chief Operating Officer

Rebecca Garrison
Information Systems Manager

Staff

Stacie Cain
Administrative Assistant

Ashley Chase
Staff Attorney and Legislative Liaison

Gina Circo
Performance Analyst

Katie Irwin
Staff Accountant

Michelle Jensen
Training Coordinator

Brandy Lombardi
Administration and Accounting Specialist

Cara Nord
Staff Attorney

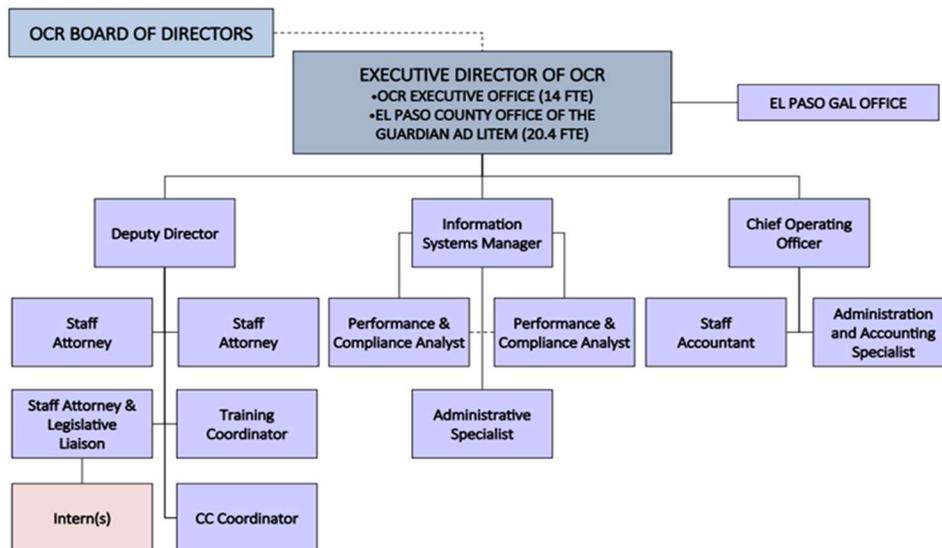
Alexis Perry-Scott
Performance Analyst

Alex Wolff
Case Consultant Coordinator

TBD
Staff Attorney

Colorado Office of the Child's Representative (OCR) Organizational Chart

November 1, 2021



Agency Overview

OCR is an independent agency within the Judicial branch mandated to provide competent and effective legal representation to children involved in the Colorado court system. OCR was created by the general assembly in 2000 to improve representation for Colorado's most vulnerable children by establishing minimum practice standards and providing litigation support, accessible high-quality statewide training, and oversight of the practice. At the time of the OCR's creation, the general assembly had serious concerns about the subpar quality of representation provided to children in Colorado, including: 1) financial barriers to the necessary frontloading of services or ongoing dedication of the proper amount of time to cases; 2) GAL caseloads impairing appropriate case preparation and investigation; 3) insufficient meaningful interaction by GALs with children in their environment; and 4) a lack of participation by GALs in court. As a result, the OCR is mandated in C.R.S. § 13-91-101, *et seq.* to:

1. Ensure the provision and availability of high-quality, accessible training throughout the state and establish minimum training requirements for GALs/Counsel.
2. Establish minimum practice standards and caseload limitations for GALs/Counsel.
3. Provide oversight for the practice of GALs/Counsel while working cooperatively with each Judicial District.
4. Establish fair and realistic compensation rates sufficient to attract and retain high-quality, experienced attorneys to serve as GALs/Counsel.
5. Seek to enhance and study additional funding sources.
6. Provide support for the CASA program as described in C.R.S. §19-1-213.
7. Assess and document the effectiveness of various models of representation
8. Conduct program review and outcome-based evaluations of the OCR on an annual basis to determine if the office is effectively and efficiently meeting the goals of improving child and family well-being and the duties set forth in the enabling legislation.

“She’s done tremendous things for me and my case. She really understands me and is probably the reason I’ve made it this far.”

- A youth’s feedback about an OCR attorney

OCR currently contracts with approximately 265 attorneys who provide high quality legal representation to children and youth in all 22 judicial districts in Colorado. OCR attorneys are skilled in child welfare and juvenile law and processes. They are knowledgeable of evidence-based social science research and trained in child welfare and/or juvenile delinquency representation best practices. Depending upon the case to which the attorney is appointed, the attorneys are known as Guardians *ad litem* (GALs), Counsel for Children or Youth, or Child Legal Representatives (CLRs). They provide attorney services at a rate of \$80 per hour in the following case types:

Case Type	OCR Responsibility
Dependency & Neglect (D&N)	All GAL appointments (<i>a GAL is appointed for each child/youth in every dependency and neglect case in Colorado</i>)
Underage Party seeking a Marriage License	All GAL appointments (a GAL is appointed for all youth 16-17 years of age seeking a marriage license)
Delinquency (JD) & Direct File	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for every appointment made by the Court.
Truancy	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for every appointment made by the Court.
Paternity & Support	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for appointments when at least one party is indigent.
Probate	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for appointments when at least one party is indigent.
Adoption & Relinquishment	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for every appointment made by the Court.
Mental Health	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for every appointment made by the Court.
Victim Witness	Appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and the OCR pays for every appointment made by the Court.

The statutory roles and responsibilities vary slightly by proceeding. A GAL's professional duties flow solely to the best interests of the child and they make recommendations to the Court regarding the best interests of the child/youth, while Counsel's duties apply to the child/youth client and they advocate for the child/youth's position. Both are appointed to independently investigate the matter and to advocate for the child/youth through all stages of the proceedings. The OCR may be responsible for additional appointments in other proceedings when representation of a child's best interests is deemed necessary by the Court.

The court also has discretion to appoint attorneys under contract with the OCR in domestic relations proceedings as a Child's Legal Representative (CLR) under C.R.S. §14-10-116, which requires the state to bear all costs of such appointments if the court finds the parties are indigent.

Currently, the OCR provides attorney services to Colorado's children in one of two ways:

Independent Contractors: In FY21 the OCR contracted with approximately 265 attorneys throughout Colorado. These attorneys often own small businesses and include both solo

practitioners and law firms. OCR attorneys often live and work in the same communities as the children and youth they serve.

The OCR's El Paso County Guardian Ad Litem Office (OGAL): OGAL was created in 2001 in direct response to Senate Bill 99-215 (Long Appropriations Bill), Footnote 135, which directed the Judicial Department to pilot alternative methods of providing GAL services. OGAL employs 12 attorneys, 5 CCs and administrative support staff (20.4 FTE). The CCs are social service professionals that supplement attorney services by providing, for example, analysis of treatment needs, meaningful participation in case staffings, communication with treatment providers, and observation of parent/child visits. The use of multidisciplinary staff as part of the legal team is recognized as a promising practice by the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) and in a growing body of research from groups including the American Bar Association, Family Justice Initiative, Casey Family Programs and DHHS Children's Bureau.

OCR maintains high expectations of its independent contractors and the OGAL state employees as set forth in the Attorney Qualifications and Standards section later in this report.

OCR advocates on a statewide basis through participation in a variety of committees and taskforces related to juvenile and child welfare law and services (see Appendix B). Staff from the OCR participate in the Court Improvement Program (CIP), are heavily involved in the work in Colorado around the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First), including co-chairing the implementation committee, and participate on a number of juvenile justice committees, including the Juvenile Justice Reform Committee and the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Council. In addition, the OCR serves as a resource to legislators by providing subject matter expertise, answering questions and providing nonpartisan research concerning children, youth, juvenile and family issues. OCR welcomes comments and questions from legislators regarding GALs, counsel for youth, legislation, Family First, Juvenile Justice or specific issues concerning children or their attorneys in a legislator's community.

“He doesn't act like he needs to be the boss of me. I can't describe it, but sometimes the caseworkers and foster managers are like 'you need to do this'. He just comes along beside me, professionally.”

- A caregiver's feedback about an OCR attorney

OCR Performance Goals

OCR has worked diligently to fulfill its statutory mandates and has been successful in many ways. To continue building on this success, the OCR has committed to three performance goals which encompass its statutory mandates and seeks to continuously improve in each area going forward.

[Goal 1: Provide children a voice in the Colorado legal system through effective attorney services and advocacy.](#)

Engaging and Empowering Youth

OCR released an Engaging and Empowering Youth (“E&EY”) Report in November of 2020, available at <https://coloradochildrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Engaging-and-Empowering-Youth-Paper.pdf>. This comprehensive report delves into over 300 youth surveys collected over a three-year period and numerous other data sources measuring youth engagement. This data and review lead to a set of recommendations detailed in the report. The report has garnered national attention and the OCR has presented on it at the NACC, within Colorado and in other states. It was featured in the NACC Guardian Spring 2021 issue.

Implementation of the E&EY recommendations began in FY21 and will continue through FY22. The recommendations urge continuation of dedicated attorney time to the E&EY program and collection of youth feedback as well as:

- Further incorporate youth feedback and youth voice into OCR policies and programming,
- Increase youth attendance in court,
- Explore strategies to use youth surveys in the OCR attorney oversight processes.

To further incorporate youth voice and perspective into OCR’s policies and programming, the OCR has formed a lived experts action panel (LEAP) comprised of 12 young adults with lived experience in D&N, Juvenile Delinquency, and/or truancy systems. These lived experts meet with the OCR regularly to inform the representation and services OCR attorneys provide to Colorado children/youth. During the initial meeting, LEAP members indicated they joined because they want to use their voice, make positive change, help other children/youth, and share their insight and experiences with OCR attorneys and case consultants. Many LEAP members also expressed an interest in legal careers. OCR is proud to present the members of LEAP:

David Saiz

Lindsay Saunders Velez

April McMullen

Rachel Kelalu

Shelby Costello

Rashiaa Veal

Nyomi Davis

Maya Chandler

Luisa Hernandez

Alexander Miller

Elizabeth Arrieta

In FY21, the OCR created a [Youth Center](#) on its website to provide additional resources and outreach to young people in Colorado. It is comprised of a section for youth and for stakeholders working with youth. The youth center offers opportunity to provide feedback to the OCR or others, explains youth rights, and provides toolkits and resources on things like COVID-19 and transitioning from foster care.

Another component of ensuring youth voice is ensuring GALs/counsel spend time with youth, establishing rapport and trust, and getting to know the youth and their positions. Correlations regarding time spent with youth and their level of trust or desire to attend court were identified in the E&EY report. The CJD 04-06 requires an attorney to conduct an initial placement visit with a youth in the first 30 days of a D&N appointment. OCR generates reports from its online case management and billing system, C.A.R.E.S., to monitor timely initial visits with children in D&N cases and attorney caseloads. This data is used as one measure of attorney effectiveness and advocacy.

OCR conducts youth reference interviews as a part of its renewal procedure for one third of Colorado's Judicial Districts each year, providing another important method of seeking direct youth feedback. In FY21, OCR conducted 86 youth reference interviews regarding the 73 attorneys up for renewal. This feedback is used in evaluating attorney compliance with OCR practice standards and is discussed with each attorney during their renewal interview. ***(All quotes used throughout this report come directly from the reference interviews conducted in FY21).***

“I just really trusted him. There were a lot of caseworkers that I worked with who never understood me but I think [my GAL] did, and still does.”

- A youth's feedback about an OCR attorney

To assess youth attendance at court, the OCR has added quarterly reports, including:

- Number of youth over the age of 5 who attend permanency planning, benchmark, and review hearings.
- Number of youth who utilize an *in-camera* interview with the judicial officer. (An *in-camera* interview allows a youth to meet more privately with the judicial officer, rather than attending the public court hearing where parents and others may be in attendance).

These reports are reviewed internally at the OCR and sent to our state-wide judicial contacts.

According to OCR data from CARES, 12% of youth over the age of 5 attended a benchmark, permanency or review hearings between July 1, 2020, and Feb 28, 2021. In that same time frame, youth met with their judicial officer a total of 188 times through an *in-camera* interview. Youth attendance at court is a complicated measure for the OCR to impact in that it is only partly in the control of the agency and attorneys. Judicial officers and other parties play important roles in allowing/encouraging youth to attend court. However, the OCR believes that the agency and the child's GAL are in a strong position to push this policy and effectuate change across the system using strategies identified in the E&EY 2020 Report.

To promote youth attendance in court, the OCR developed district-specific reports and began training on the subject both on a national stage and throughout Colorado. District-specific E&EY

presentations focused on showcasing district data and seeking further information about the barriers around getting youth to court.

For FY22, OCR is streamlining its youth survey to make it more youth-friendly and to better target it to meet OCR's program evaluation, attorney oversight, and performance evaluation goals. The OCR has engaged with the Colorado Evaluation and Action lab to support OCR in this process, and OCR's LEAP has provided feedback on the survey questions and administration. OCR plans to complete this survey by September 30, 2021 and begin administering it at youth events in October 2021.

Attorney Qualifications and Standards

In addition to the professional standards governing all attorneys, OCR attorneys are held to standards set by Chief Justice Directive (CJD) 04-06, OCR manuals and policies and the Attorney's contract with the OCR. Full-time GALs/Counsel may not have a caseload of more than 100 children/youth. GALs and Counsel for Youth frequently appear in court and must have high quality litigation and motions practice skills. In addition to these more traditional attorney roles, a GAL must independently investigate the matters to which they are appointed, make recommendations that are in the best interests of the child, and advocate on behalf of the child's best interests. Counsel must also independently investigate the matters to which they are appointed, work closely with the youth to develop their legal position, and zealously advocate for that position. CJD 04-06 standards require D&N GALs to meet in person with each child/youth within the first 30 days of their appointment and within 30 days of any placement change. OCR Attorneys are required to interview parents, talk to the school if applicable, make diligent efforts to observe parent and child interactions and other duties necessary to complete an independent investigation regarding the best interests of the child. CJD 04-06 also requires JD attorneys to meet with a youth as soon as possible, for youth who are in custody within seven days of their appointment, and other activities to complete a thorough and independent investigation to promote and protect the juvenile's rights.

“Very kind and with respect like I was somebody worth listening to. Not a lot of people listen to African Americans about certain things.”

- A parent's feedback about an OCR attorney

While Counsel for Youth enjoy a traditional attorney-client relationship with the youth, the unique statutory responsibilities of a GAL and CLR do not. The “client” of the GAL/CLR is the best interests of the child, and the attorney's professional responsibilities flow solely to the child's best interests. The GAL's/CLR's determination of the child's best interests must include consultation with the child in a developmentally appropriate manner, honor the child's and family's culture and strengths and protect the child's health, safety, and well-being.

Oversight and Evaluation of Attorney Practice

OCR strives to meet its goals in part by developing and using data-driven practices. However, child welfare practice does not lend itself to simple outcome-based analysis, as appropriate results for one child/youth may not be appropriate for another child/youth. OCR concentrates its data collection on compliance with high quality practice standards to assess the effectiveness of representation. OCR's efforts in practice assessment and data collection have received state and national attention.

Every year the OCR establishes lists of attorneys eligible for OCR appointments in each of the 22 judicial districts using a comprehensive evaluation strategy and benchmarks to ensure compliance with the CJD and OCR practice standards. This evaluation strategy includes:

- Annual verification process
- Tri-annual renewal application process
- New Attorney interviews
- Ongoing assessment and periodic review of attorney activity
- Risk-based sampling

OCR requires all existing attorneys to confirm compliance with CJD 04-06, disclose professional disciplinary history, verify fulfillment of OCR training by specifying which trainings were completed, and verify malpractice insurance requirements. Every three years, the OCR requires attorneys to undergo a more involved contract renewal process that also includes analysis of more qualitative data sources, such as court observations and interviews of child/youth, parent, and caregiver references. OCR accomplishes its more involved renewal process by staggering judicial districts on a three-year contract renewal cycle. This annual verification and tri-annual review processes include a standardized review of data sources along with benchmarks, to ensure consistent application. These data points are used as measures to evaluate attorney effectiveness and advocacy and include (those in bold only apply to the tri-annual renewal process and those in italics are being explored beginning in FY21):

- D&N CJD Visit Report (to show compliance with the initial 30-day visit requirement in CJD 04-06)
- CJD Exceptions Report
- Activity Report (showing average cost per case and percentage of time by activity data)
- Discipline Report
- Stakeholder Survey Report
- Formal Complaints
- Outstanding Issues Form
- **Court Observation Summary**
- **Case Reference Summary (detailing results of reference interviews with youth, parents, and caregivers)**

- **Writing Sample**
- **One on One Interview**
- **Activity in Timeframe Report (showing a snapshot of the first 45 days of each D&N appointment)**
- **Youth Surveys**

OCR seeks stakeholder feedback for each verifying and renewing attorney through an annual survey. Prior to FY21, this survey was sent to Judicial Officers and various court staff, departments of Human Services staff, CASA agencies, probation officers, and attorneys representing other parties in the cases. OCR attorney feedback indicated this was not helpful as most of the parties who received the survey were opposing parties with necessarily divergent roles. This also made the feedback difficult to use as a reliable measure. After careful consideration the OCR decided to pilot only seeking feedback from Judicial Officers in FY21. All responses to the survey are reviewed by the OCR and in FY21, the OCR received a total of 349 survey responses concerning 191 attorneys.

In FY21, the OCR conducted 278 reference interviews with either youth, parents or caregivers. These interviews concerned the 73 renewing attorneys and utilizes a standardized script. In addition, the OCR completed 194 court observations involving 63 attorneys and concerning 294 children/youth. These observations utilize a separate standardized form for D&N proceedings and JD proceedings.

In addition to the measures listed above, the OCR has a formalized complaint process which provides an additional mechanism to ensure OCR attorneys are meeting practice standards. In FY21, the OCR received 51 complaints to investigate. For each complaint investigated, regardless of the factual allegations, the OCR confirms attorney compliance with practice standards and reviews the court's on-line file and CARES data. Complaints identifying lack of compliance with the CJD lead to further investigation of the attorney's performance and typically includes an audit of additional case files/activities.

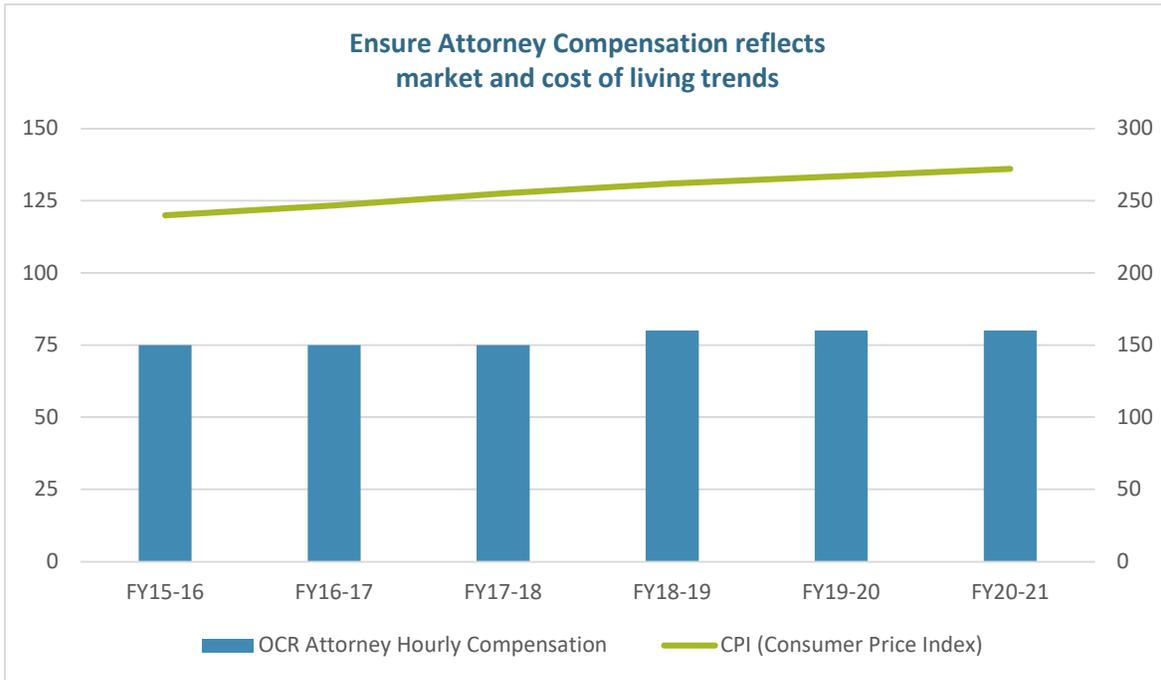
“He’s probably the best person I’ve met on my team. He always wants to know how I’m feeling and he understands me a lot, and I really like that about him”

- A youth’s feedback about an OCR attorney

Fair and Reasonable Compensation

C.R.S. §13-91-105 requires the OCR to establish fair and realistic rates of compensation to enhance the legal representation of children/youth. The hourly rate paid to OCR contract attorneys increased to \$80 beginning July 1, 2018. During that budget session, the JBC suggested that rate increases should be sought more frequently so there is less fiscal impact than waiting 4 or 5 years between requests. Accordingly, the OCR (in conjunction with the ORPC and OADC) later sought a rate increase of 4% to correlate with state employee cost of living increases for the

preceding two years. This request was initially approved by the JBC in March of 2019 and would have gone into effect July 1, 2020. Once the state fiscal impact from the COVID-19 pandemic was clear, the OCR worked with the JBC to remove this request and the rate has remained stagnant since 2018. The OCR will be assessing the realities of the state budget and our statutory mandate to ensure fair compensation for our contract attorneys.

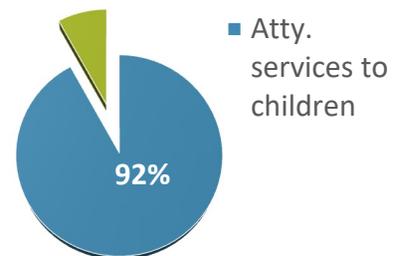


Goal 2: Optimize efficiencies in attorney practice and billing.

Manage Appropriations

OCR strives to be efficient and effective in utilizing its annual appropriation. OCR’s budget is driven largely by attorney activity and caseloads. In FY21, the OCR used 92% of expended funds for attorney services and only 8% for administration, expending 83% of our appropriation and reverting over \$5 million to the general fund. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact filings across the state which in turn impacted the OCR’s case-driven budget. OCR made adjustments during the previous budget session, balancing the impacts of COVID and our projections. Delay experienced by the

FY 21 Administrative Expenditures (through 6/30/21)



judicial branch with jury trials and other complex trials impact the cases our Attorneys work on as well. OCR will continue to monitor caseload and workload impacts closely.

Overview of the OCR Budget

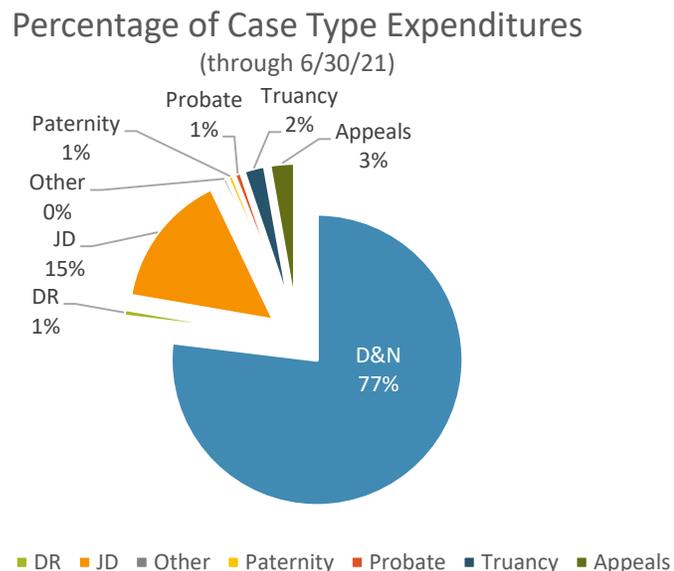
In FY21, the OCR continued its focus on creating efficiencies and securing basic funding to meet the expanding need for attorney services. The following is an overview of the OCR budget and an outline of factors that contribute to the budget.

Summary of Appropriations

As mentioned above, the OCR spent 8% of its budget on its central administrative office, which is dedicated to fulfilling the OCR's statutory mandates. OCR expended \$22,590,135 on attorney services for children and \$62,980 (including grant funding received by the OCR) to providing high quality and accessible training to GALs and other stakeholders throughout Colorado. The general assembly passed \$1,550,000 through OCR's budget to Colorado CASA for distribution to local CASA programs.

Breakdown of the Mandated Attorney Services Provided by the OCR

OCR attorneys represent the best interests of children in D&N, JD, direct file, domestic relations, truancy, probate, relinquishment, adoption, paternity, support, mental health, minor victim witness, underage marriage cases and appeals. The appointments in dependency and neglect cases account for 77% of attorney service expenditures. These appointments are completely driven by case filings as every child/youth in Colorado named in a D&N case is appointed a GAL. Appointments in every other case type are by the discretion of the court and the OCR has no control over how many appointments are made. The breakdown of expenditures by case type is reflected in this chart.



D&N and Juvenile Delinquency case types present similar issues concerning family dynamics, placements, and treatment. OCR attorneys continue to report that youth served in the

juvenile delinquency system in FY21 frequently present with issues that were previously served or similar to those in D&N case types. Judicial officers and OCR’s courtroom observations confirm attorney reports.

OCR experienced a 4.5% decrease in D&N case filings in FY21 as compared to the previous fiscal year, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. OCR’s court appointed counsel (CAC) expenditures (accounting for approximately 78% of all FY21 costs) were down almost 7% from the prior year. As mentioned previously, the OCR will closely monitor filings, appointments and expenditures as COVID restrictions continue to ease in FY22.

“She is fantastic and so awesome, I mean that from the bottom of my heart. She was a huge support”

- A caregiver’s feedback about an OCR attorney

Title IV-E Funding

In late 2018 the Children’s Bureau updated its Child Welfare Policy Manual to allow Title IV-E agencies to claim matching funds for independent attorneys representing children or parents. In response, the General Assembly passed SB19-258 regarding the administration of these funds. OCR began drawing down federal funds in FY21 and using those funds to enhance representation in several ways. First, the OCR is increasing its support of multidisciplinary law practice by contracting with additional case consultants as described in other sections of this report. Second, the OCR will increase litigation support and staffing to better meet the needs of our growing number of attorneys, to address the increased complexity of cases, and advance best practices in child representation. Lastly, the OCR will bolster our training program to ensure high quality, up to date training that is accessible state-wide.

Maximize use and effectiveness of OCR’s on-line case management and billing system

The current C.A.R.E.S system successfully launched in April of 2018. Contractors submit invoices through C.A.R.E.S on a monthly basis, allowing greater control and clearer guidelines for contractors reconciling billing and predicting payments. This also allows for up-to-date budget analysis and projections.

In addition, the new system groups billable activities by CJD requirements to facilitate case management and compliance review. One feature of OCR C.A.R.E.S. is the enhanced reporting capability which is instrumental to OCR’s oversight. These reports are discussed in the Oversight and Evaluation of Attorney Practice section above.

“I was really happy I got assigned to her and the way she handled everything, the bumps in the road, the way she made me feel like I had a voice. I loved the way she handled everything.”

- A youth’s feedback about an OCR attorney

Provide Litigation Support

Well supported and trained attorneys are more efficient and effective when representing a child’s best interests and child welfare attorneys must be trained on legal principals as well as social science research and best practices. OCR provides the following litigation supports to contract attorneys:

Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID)

The GRID is Colorado’s first comprehensive advocacy guide for attorneys in dependency and neglect proceedings. First published by the OCR with grant funding from the Colorado CJA Task Force in 2012, this robust reference guide has been given to all OCR contract attorneys and is available online. The GRID features 8 hearings chapters, which include before, during and after checklists, blackletter law discussion, practice tips and 36 comprehensive fact sheets covering a wide variety of topics. OCR continues to update the GRID annually to reflect legal and practice developments.

“She’s very good at asking what’s going on with them. Even during Covid when she could not come in the home, she would email and ask for pics of the kids and tried to keep an eye on things. I feel like she is very interested and invested in what is going on in the home and with the children.”

- A caregiver’s feedback about an OCR attorney

OCR Listserv

Each contract attorney is required to join the OCR listserv, which features a searchable archive and provides an excellent forum for attorneys to discuss difficult case issues, trends in the state, case law updates, and more. OCR also uses the listserv to communicate new case processes, inform contractors of recent developments, and provide case law and legislative updates. In FY21, attorneys sent a total of 437 emails discussing 170 topics.

Litigation Toolkit

To support attorney efficiency and effectiveness, OCR has redesigned its motions bank and the Litigation Toolkit is now available to all OCR contractors on the OCR website. The Litigation Toolkit is comprised of pleadings, social science resources and practice tools to give attorneys a centralized resource when drafting motions, preparing for litigation, and researching the multitude of issues impacting cases. Currently, the Litigation Toolkit has 104 pleadings, 32 social science resources, and 70 practice tools available to contractors. OCR added 68 new or updated documents to the Litigation Toolkit in FY21 and will continue to update and add documents to ensure it remains current and comprehensive.

Quarterly Newsletters

OCR publishes a quarterly newsletter to ensure all contract attorneys have up-to-date information regarding case law updates, legislative updates, training announcements, and more. The newsletter is archived on the OCR website and provides links to new cases (which

are then added to an online bank of cases) and a searchable link to access new statutes. In FY21, the OCR published 4 newsletters.

Litigation Support List

OCR maintains a list of attorneys with subject matter expertise who are approved to consult on cases in order to be efficient and effective when dealing with crossover issues like immigration, education, or appeals. Litigation support ensures attorneys have access to specialized knowledge and experience to assist in high-quality representation of the child's best interests.

Case Consultant (CC) Program

The CC pilot began in FY18 in response to information gathered from the OCR's Multidisciplinary Law Office (MDLO) Pilot Program, in which the OCR evaluated this method of providing GAL services in D&N cases. While the pilot program was ultimately ended due to the high costs of the model, some recommendations came from the evaluation including exploring ways to make social workers accessible to more GALs and to utilize social workers to enhance best interest representation without duplicating efforts. The use of CCs allows additional work on cases at a lower hourly rate. The DHHS Children's Bureau has stated, "Social work team members were able to help clients access services, support clients in meetings and planning with the child welfare agency, and advocated for streamlined and non-duplicative services for families." OCR was granted (through the budget process) funding for a new CC coordinator who began work late in FY19 and in FY20, the number of CCs working with contract attorneys increased from approximately 60 to 90.

OCR then launched a program to provide CCs to attorneys on a contract basis, managed through the CC coordinator. This allows contract attorneys to request assistance on a case-by-case basis. In FY21, the OCR contracted with three CCs who provided assistance in 39 cases covering 12 judicial districts. OCR recently completed a second round of CC contracts, which will replace one CC who left the initial cohort and add five more CCs to the program. OCR is working with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab to develop an evaluation plan for this program and upcoming CARES enhancements will allow the OCR to begin measuring the number of cases on which a CC has billed, as well as costs.

"She really really cares about the kids she is advocating for. She goes above and beyond what is expected - she truly loves these kids and wants things to be alright. She does that for all her kids. She really loves the people. I was so honored to have her as my GAL and now as my friend. She is an immaculate person. I would not be as successful without her in my life."

- A youth's feedback about an OCR attorney

Goal 3: Ensure attorneys and case consultants remain current in state and federal law and regulations, social science research, best practices in diversity and inclusion and evidence-based services.

In FY17 the OCR formalized its approach to cultivating a learning and practice environment that focuses on three areas:

- Accessibility - through the OCR website improve accessibility and availability of resources.
- Community – provide a community for contract GALs to partner in shared learning and practice.
- Human Capital – use the collective competencies, expertise and other intangible assets of its contract attorneys and other key partners in the child welfare and juvenile justice communities.

These areas of focus are the overarching umbrella that helps OCR staff craft and refine its litigation support and training. Many of these strategies are discussed in previous sections. The OCR has determined that the following four core competencies provide the foundation of high-quality representation for dependency and neglect and juvenile delinquency cases:

- Ethics/Role of GAL, CLR, and Counsel for Youth
- 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

In FY22, the OCR will also offer a series of concentrated and comprehensive trainings covering four key core competencies that are likely to have the most positive impact on the outcomes of children, youth, and families, including:

- Placement advocacy
- Youth voice and youth rights
- Effective advocacy in delinquency cases
- Trial skills

Throughout all components of the training program, the OCR infuses best practices in advocacy specific to the Family First Prevention Services Act requirements and Colorado’s Juvenile Justice

Reform implementation, as applicable. OCR’s training program also addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion in all practice areas and case types.

In addition, the OCR continues to offer a mentoring program to partner experienced GALs with new GALs to navigate this complex area of law in their first year of practice. In FY21, the OCR established 15 mentoring pairs covering 7 judicial districts.

The General Assembly charged the OCR with providing high-quality and accessible training throughout the state. All 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 these requirements, the OCR hosts an annual conference and provides periodic training throughout the year. In order to ensure this training is accessible state-wide, the OCR will continue providing webinars at least once a quarter. In addition, the OCR works with an audio/visual team to record the majority of OCR sponsored trainings. These videos are archived and available on OCR’s website. OCR partners with other agencies to provide cross-systems training opportunities as well. In FY21, the OCR provided a total of 85 CLEs as follows:

- Core Competencies I: Orientation for New Attorneys
- Core Competencies II: Advanced Training for New Attorneys
- OCR Annual Fall Conference
- 9th Annual Excellence in Juvenile Defense, cohosted with the PD, OADC and CJDC
- OCR Trials Skills Training
- Supporting Educational Stability for Children and Youth in Foster Care
- Ethics & GAL Practice: Trending Topics 2020
- Engaging & Empowering Youth: Why Do We Do It & How To Do It Well
- Legal Advocacy & the Use of Psychotropic Medications for Youth in Foster Care
- Appellate Strategy Update
- QRTP Benchcard Training
- Best Practices in Visitation and Family Time
- GAL Safety Assessment Training
- School Discipline Representation
- Deconstructing Equity
- Finding Family: The Importance of Relative & Kin Placements

“She was one of the people who I could be honest about something with, concerns I had with my kids. She would take the extra time and make it a point to see what I saw. She also spent a lot of time with my kids and had her own bond with my kids. She would just pay attention to them.”

- A parent’s feedback about an OCR attorney

- The Role of the GAL in Probate & Guardianship Cases
- Parental Gatekeeping, Parental Alienation & Social Science in the Family Law Courtroom
- Challenges in Truancy Cases
- Compassion Fatigue & Stress Resiliency

At the end of FY21, OCR has a total of 378 hours of CLEs available online for easy accessibility to attorneys across Colorado. In addition to the state trainings offered, OCR paid registration fees for 23 delinquency contract GALs to attend the 9th Annual Excellence in Juvenile Defense Conference and 25 contract attorneys to attend the National Association of Counsel for Children annual conference. Every month the OCR sends out a “Training Tuesdays” email with details about training opportunities across the state as well as reminders regarding OCR sponsored/approved trainings.

CASA Overview and Update

The OCR works with Colorado CASA to support Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) as required in C.R.S. 13-91-105 and the provisions of HB19-1282 which established C.R.S. 19-1-213. While GALs are the child’s legal advocate and parties to D&N cases, CASAs are appointed for a portion of the children in 18 of Colorado’s 22 judicial districts by the court to provide additional information and support children and their families. Each CASA program operates under a memorandum of understanding between the program and the chief judge of the judicial district. The CASA role and expectations are set out in the Children’s Code at §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 annual training for volunteers. Most CASA volunteers concentrate their valuable service on one case at a time. Typically, volunteers must commit to 18 months of service, but many volunteers serve throughout the life of a case. In addition, some local programs require a minimum monthly time commitment from their volunteers. CASA volunteers monitor and increase support to counter the effects of trauma and increase children’s resilience, education success, health and overall well-being focusing on permanency, safety, education, health, development, relationships, extracurricular activities and transition to adulthood.

While GALs and CASA volunteers work collaboratively to advance the best interests of children, their roles differ in significant ways and the Children’s Code requires they each provide independent information to the court. Where the GAL is a licensed attorney, subject to the rules of the profession and ethical code of conduct and is an active party in all litigation related to the best interests of the child; CASA volunteers are non-attorney advocates subject to training and requirements of their local CASA program and the state CASA program. They provide written reports to the court and parties and establish supportive relationships with children, parents, relatives, kin, and placements.

The OCR supports CASA in Colorado in a number of ways including serving as the pass-through agency for general fund dollars and providing technical support and consultation to facilitate reimbursement of Title IV-E eligible training costs incurred by Colorado CASA. In FY21, Colorado CASA received \$1,550,000 from the State of Colorado as a pass-through line item in the OCR budget. The state office used a portion of the monies for general program support and the remaining funds supported local CASA programs across the state. In FY21, 2,276 citizens volunteered as CASAs in 2,480 D&N cases, expending over 100,000 volunteer hours while serving 4,498 children and youth.

Looking Ahead

OCR is eager to continue our work in the coming year as we tackle our Wildly Important Goal of securing Client-Directed Representation for older youth. The agency hopes to add an appellate/litigation strategies focused staff attorney to further our work and looks forward to continued support of the wonderful contract attorneys advocating for children and youth across the state.

“I trust her with my life at this point. Which I'm doing at this point, because it's her word that's getting me where I want to be.”

-A youth's feedback about an OCR attorney

Appendix A

OCR Legislative Review

OCR continues to be a resource for state legislators by providing subject matter expertise, answering questions and providing nonpartisan research concerning the Children’s Code, child welfare law, juvenile delinquency law, Family First and other issues impacting children and families. The OCR participated through consultation, stakeholder meetings and/or testimony on the following bills in the 2021 legislative session:

HB21-1018 Adoptive Parents Payments to Outside Providers

Rep. Bennett, Van Beber; Sen. Jacquez Lewis

HB21-1031 Jurisdiction to Modify Family Law Orders on Appeal

Rep. Daugherty; Sen. Lee, Gardner

HB21-1059 Online Student Protections

Rep. Geitner, Bradfield; Sen. Lundeen

HB21-1060 U Visa Certification Requirements

Rep. Gonzales-Gutierrez, Jodeh

HB21-1064 Update Process Juvenile Sex Offender Registry

Rep. Benavidez, Amabile; Sen. Rodriguez

HB21-1072 Equal Access Services for Out-of-Home Placements

Rep. Froelich; Sen. Fields, Jacquez Lewis

HB21-1073 Support Foster Families License Plate

Rep. Michaelson-Jenet, Van Beber

HB21-1084 Drivers’ Licenses for Foster Children

Rep. Van Winkle, Exum Sr.; Sen. Hisey

HB21-1091 Sentencing Juveniles Transferred to Adult Court

Rep. Daugherty

HB21-1094 Foster Youth in Transition Program

Rep. Daugherty, Van Beber; Sen. Zenzinger

HB21-1096 Foster Parents' Bill of Rights

Rep. Van Beber

HB21-1099 Policies and Procedures to Identify Domestic Abuse

Rep. Ransom, Michaelson-Jenet; Sen. Zenzinger, Smallwood

HB21-1101 Preserving Family Relationships in Child Placement

Rep. Ransom; Sen. Buckner

HB21-1108 Gender Identity Expression Anti-Discrimination

Rep. Esgar; Sen. Moreno

HB21-1110 Colorado Laws for Persons with Disabilities

Rep. Ortiz

HB21-1151 Indian Tribes to Certify Own Foster Homes

Rep. McLachlan, Catlin; Sen. Coram

HB21-1220 Colorado Child Support Commission Recommendations

Rep. Froelich; Sen. Fields

HB21-1228 Domestic Violence Training Court Personnel

Rep. Froelich; Sen. Smallwood, Winter

HB21-1272 Supporting the Child Protection Ombudsman

Rep. Cutter

HB21-1313 Child Protection Ombudsman and Immigrant Children

Rep. Benavidez, Gonzales-Gutierrez

HB21-1315 Costs Assessed to Juveniles in the Criminal Justice System

Rep. Herod

SB21-059 Juvenile Justice Code Reorganization

Rep. Geitner, Gonzales-Gutierrez; Sen. Lee, Gardner

SB21-066 Juvenile Diversion Programs

Rep. Michaelson-Jenet; Sen. Lee

SB21-071 Limit the Detention of Juveniles

Sen. Buckner

SB21-117 Foster Care Student Services Coordination

Rep. Michaelson-Jenet; Sen. Moreno

SB21-182 School Discipline

Rep. Herod; Sen. Buckner

SB21-269 Licensing of Respite Child Centers

Rep. Michaelson-Jenet, Van Beber; Sen. Winter, Smallwood

Appendix B

OCR Committee Work

Successful advocacy for children is often the result of collaboration and the sharing of resources among many state agencies and child advocate organizations. The following is a 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. The 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. The OCR's Training Coordinator services on this committee.

Colorado Department of Human Services

CFSR Oversight Committee: The committee is charged with preparing for the upcoming federal review. The Executive Director is a member.

Colorado Department of Human Services Time Limited Foster Care Group: This Task Force is determining whether administrative rules are necessary based on the recommendations from a CDHS Foster Parent Steering Committee related to foster care and determining whether administrative rules are necessary. The OCR Staff Attorney sits as a non-voting member of the Task Force.

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). The OCR's Executive Director is a member of the taskforce.

Family Services Prevention Act Implementation Team: This team was created by the Child Welfare Services Delivery Taskforce to prepare Colorado for implementation of FFPSA and complete Colorado's prevention plan to submit to the Children's Bureau of the federal government. The OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison is the co-chair of this committee.

FFPSA Workgroups: In addition to the implementation team, there are several workgroups that the OCR participates in. The Deputy Director sits on the juvenile justice workgroup and the OCR's Staff Attorney/Legislative Liaison participates in the QRTP workgroup.

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 Task Force makes policy and training recommendations to child welfare agencies and the judiciary and makes recommendations regarding the distribution of federal CJA funds. The OCR's Training Coordinator 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. The OCR's Deputy Director is a member.

Colorado Youth Leadership Network (COLYN). 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 for each year's Youth Awareness Week. OCR's Staff Attorney is a member.

Institutional Assessment Work Group. This group is drafting recommended revisions to Colorado Department of Human Services 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 Staff Attorney is a member.

Kinship Foster Care Certification Task Group. This group drafted recommended revisions to Colorado Department of Human Services regulations related to the requirements for kinship caretakers of Colorado children/youth placed through child welfare cases. OCR's Staff 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 statewide training. The OCR Training Coordinator 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. The OCR's Staff Attorney serves on this committee.

DYS/DHS Transition Group. This group is drafting recommendations to improve the collaborations between, and services and supports provided for, Colorado children/youth who transition from the child welfare system to the department of youth services system and vice versa. OCR's Staff Attorney is a member.

DYS State Policy Review Committee. A DYS-assembled committee that allows stakeholders to discuss pending DYS policies and changes. As a member, OCR's Deputy Director reviews the 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.

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: 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. **CIP Executive Committee** is comprised of judicial officers, judicial and executive branch directors or their representatives and judicial branch staff who share responsibility for ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families in D&N and other child welfare cases. The OCR Executive Director was appointed as a voting member.

OCR staff also serve on the following CIP groups:

Core Member Committee: This group is appointed by the CIP Executive Committee to assist in carrying out their charge. The OCR's Staff Attorney is a member.

High Quality Legal Representation Committee. The OCR's Staff Attorney is a 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. The OCR's Training Coordinator serves on this subcommittee.

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 Coordinator 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. The OCR's Deputy Director serves on the advisory committee.

Minority Overrepresentation Subcommittee of the Fourth Judicial District's Juvenile Best Practices Committee. This subcommittee provides trainings addressing minority youth overrepresentation in Colorado's child welfare, school disciplinary, and juvenile justice systems; conducts a study of minority youth overrepresentation in El Paso County's child welfare system; and recognizes El Paso County youth who have overcome adversity and inspired others to do the same through Inspire Awards. The OCR's Staff Attorney is a member of the leadership team.

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. The OCR's Deputy Director sits on the Council.

Code Review Committee: The committee is reviewing Article 2 of Title 19 to promote improvements to Article 2 of the Code, 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 Deputy Director serves on this committee.

Professional Development Committee: The committee is developing a set of core competencies and an action plan for youth serving professionals to establish standard training and a uniform understanding of core principles needed to work with youth. The committee will also work to increase training capacity and identify the various professionals and stakeholders that should participate in the trainings. The OCR Training Coordinator 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: 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.” The 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. OCR's Deputy Director is a member of this committee, and OCR staff also serve on drafting subcommittees for the following rules: Adjudication; Discovery; Indian Child Welfare Act; Termination.

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 dependency and neglect cases are resolved within six months of filing. OCR's Deputy Director serves on this workgroup.

Legislative Committees: Legislation passed by the General Assembly requires implementation by the Executive and Judicial Branches. OCR attorney staff participate in multi-disciplinary committees in order to affect the General Assembly's intent in the area of child and juvenile law.

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 Deputy Director services as 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 a collaborative coalition to help combat human trafficking. The Council is expected to improve comprehensive services for victims and survivors of human trafficking, to assist in the successful prosecution of human traffickers, and to enhance human trafficking prevention efforts in Colorado. OCR's Executive Director is a member of the council.

Human Trafficking Task Group. This group is reviewing the recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Sex Trafficking of children and youth report, completing the statewide self-assessment, and will make recommendations for Colorado's efforts to combat child trafficking. OCR's CC Coordinator is a member.

Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force (SB 13-244): In 2013, the General Assembly reauthorized the Colorado State Methamphetamine Task Force under the name “Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force” with representatives of state government, local governments, and the private sectors, including legislators, child advocates, public health officials, drug treatment providers, child welfare workers, law enforcement officers, judges, and prosecutors. The OCR's CC Coordinator is a member of the task force.

Juvenile Justice Reform Committee (SB19-108): The JJRC was created to fulfill the mandates of SB19-108 including adopting assessment tools, screening tools, selecting vendors to assist in implementation and training on the tools and developing plans to measure their effectiveness. OCR's Deputy Director is a member of the task force and also participates on the **Detention Alternatives Workgroup.**

Youth Awareness Week (YAW) 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 staff attorney serves on the YAW planning committee.

Celebration of Educational Excellence (CEEX) recognizes young people involved in foster care or youth services who will graduate from high school, received a GED, or obtained a college degree each year. Graduates have the opportunity to attend a resource fair to connect with organizations that can support their future success. OCR's staff attorney serves on the CEEX planning committee.

Coalition for Minority Equity (CMYE). The mission of the CMYE 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.

American Bar Association Section of Litigation Children's Rights Litigation Committee – Right to Counsel Strategy Group. The 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 come into contact with the legal system. The OCR's Deputy Director is a committee member.

The Family Justice Initiative is 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. OCR's CC Coordinator participates.

National Association of Child Counsel (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.