
Office of the Child's Representative



Performance Plan

July 1, 2022

*OCR is an
independent
agency within the
Judicial Department*



Mission and Values

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.

Overview

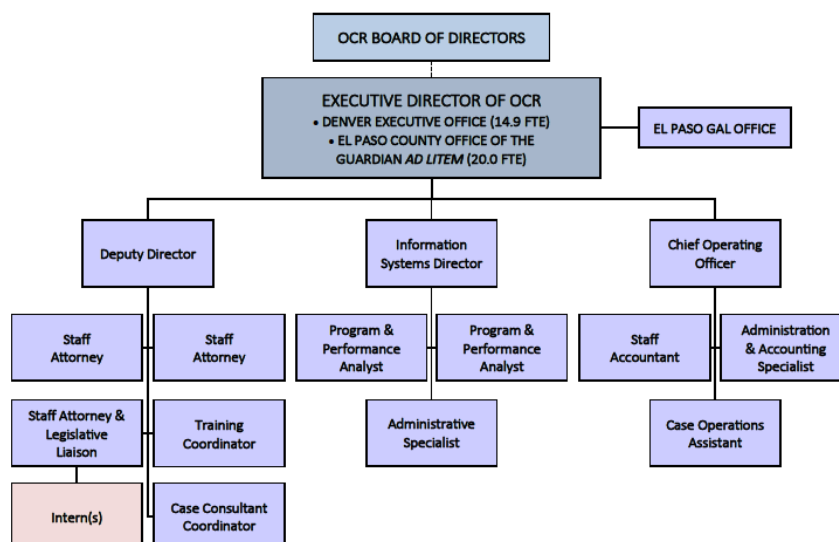
OCR was created in 2000 to address the General Assembly's concerns about the quality of representation provided to Colorado children. Colorado Revised Statute §13-91-101 et seq. mandates that OCR:

- Improve the quality of attorney services and maintain consistency of representation statewide.
- Provide accessible training statewide for attorneys.
- Establish minimum practice standards for all attorneys representing the best interests of children or acting as counsel for youth.
- Provide oversight of the practice of attorneys to ensure compliance with the established minimum standards.
- Establish fair and realistic compensation for state-appointed Guardians *ad Litem* (GAL) and Counsel for Youth (CFY) sufficient to retain high-quality, experienced attorneys.
- Serve as a resource for attorneys.
- Develop measurement instruments to assess and document the effectiveness of various models of representation.

OCR has been working diligently and successfully to fulfill these mandates and improve the quality of legal services and representation of children in Colorado. Our Executive Office, located in the Ralph Carr Judicial Center at 1300 Broadway, Suite 320, houses our Executive Director, Deputy Director, Chief Operating Officer, Information Systems Manager and the following staff members:

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

November 1, 2021



Attorney Services Provided by the OCR

OCR oversees approximately 270 attorneys who serve as GALs or CFYs in Colorado. A GAL or CFY is appointed by the Court for every child/youth named in a dependency and neglect or Foster Youth Transition Program case (as mandated in §19-1-111, §19-3-203 and §19-7-308 C.R.S.) and the OCR is responsible for oversight and payment of all these appointments including any applicable appeal. OCR is also responsible for GAL appointments for any youth ages 16 or 17 who is seeking a marriage license:

Case Type	OCR Responsibility
Dependency & Neglect	All GAL appointments ¹
Foster Youth in Transition (FYTP)	All CFY assignments or appointments.
Underage Party seeking a Marriage License	All GAL appointments (GAL appointed for all youth 16-17 seeking a marriage license)

The Court has discretion to appoint an attorney in the following proceedings and the OCR is responsible for the appointment as follows:

Case Type	OCR Responsibility
Delinquency & Direct File	All GAL appointments
Truancy	All GAL appointments
Paternity & Support	GAL appointments where at least one party is indigent
Probate	GAL appointments where at least one party is indigent
Adoption & Relinquishment	All GAL appointments
Mental Health	All GAL appointments
Victim Witness	All GAL appointments
Domestic Relations	Child's Legal Representative ("CLR") appointments when one or both parties are indigent

¹ With the passage of HB22-1038, appointments for children and youth in D&N cases in Colorado will change beginning January 9th, 2023. Under this new law children under the age of 12 will have an attorney GAL representing their best interests and youth 12 and older will have Counsel for Youth representing the youth's position.

In addition, the OCR may be responsible for appointments in other proceedings when representation is deemed necessary by the Court.

The statutory roles and responsibilities vary slightly by proceeding; however, the GAL or CLR's professional duties flow solely to the best interests of the child. The GAL is appointed to independently investigate, make recommendations that are in the best interests of the child and advocate on that child's behalf through all stages of the proceedings. CFY's professional duties flow to the youth and the CFY is appointed or assigned to counsel the youth and represent the youth's stated position through all stages of the proceeding.

In FY22 the OCR provided legal services through both independent contracts and employees:

Independent contractors: OCR contracted with approximately 270 independent contractors throughout Colorado. These contract entities are small businesses and include solo practitioners and law firms.

OCR's El Paso County GAL Office: OCR's El Paso County GAL Office (OGAL) is a multidisciplinary model of attorney services. The creation of the office was 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. This office is entering its twenty-second year of operation and employs twelve attorneys (including a managing attorney and an assistant managing attorney), five case coordinators, and support staff, totaling 20 FTE. The case coordinators are social service professionals who enhance representation in a case.

Regardless of employee or contractor status, all OCR attorneys are held to high practice expectations and are specially trained on the law, social science research, and best practices relating to issues impacting children involved in court proceedings. The legal advocacy provided by OCR attorneys plays a critical role in protecting and promoting the child's safety and well-being and ensures each child and youth has a voice throughout all aspects of their case.

Client Directed Counsel

OCR is pleased to have achieved our FY2022 Wildly Important Goal, in part by pursuing legislative change to update the attorney model of legal services. [HB22-1038](#) passed unanimously in the General Assembly and changes the current legal model of best-interests legal representation to client-directed legal representation for youth 12 and older in D&N cases. This important change provides youth in Colorado parity and procedural justice in their D&N court proceedings and is an essential component to advancing youth rights and ensuring youth have an authentic voice in their cases. OCR looks forward to building on this success in our mission to advance youth voice in Colorado.

FY23 WILDLY IMPORTANT GOAL

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

OCR is thrilled HB22-1038 passed in the 2022 Legislative Session and must now focus on thoughtful implementation of the new law in order to ensure its purposes are upheld. Purposes such as parity and procedural justice for youth in their D&N proceedings and authentic youth voice.

Strategies

- A. Provide high-quality training, resources and supports related to HB22-1038 by offering:
 - a. robust state-wide training for OCR attorneys focused on the new legislation, implementation and corresponding practice standards.
 - b. additional training for judicial partners and other stakeholders to promote consistency and common understanding.
- B. Recommend updates to the Chief Justice regarding Chief Justice Directive (CJD) 04-06 to align with current best practices and new legislation.
 - a. Gather feedback from the OCR Lived Experience Action Panel regarding attorney practice standards to ensure OCR's recommendations are grounded in the youth perspective.
 - b. Solicit input from practitioners, stakeholders and judicial officers during the process.
- C. Create an improved website focused on attorney support and youth access.
- D. Implement strategies to improve youth-related data measures for Youth in Court and Attorney's stating child/youth's position in Court.
 - a. Provide customized reports and presentations to judicial districts.
 - b. Create focused messaging on improving court attendance for youth 12 and older.
 - c. Analyze C.A.R.E.S (OCR's online case management and billing system) enhancements that could provide targeted data and inform resources.
 - d. Identify attorneys and/or districts that are leaders in this effort.

OCR Performance Goals and Strategies

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

Strategies:

- A. *Ensure children's voice & interests are paramount throughout the proceedings and in the development of policy, law & practice*
- B. *Provide and promote effective use of case consultant (CC) support to attorneys*
- C. *Provide oversight & evaluation of attorney practice*
- D. *Establish fair and reasonable compensation for OCR attorneys*

GOAL 2: OCR will optimize efficiencies in attorney practice and billing

Strategies:

- A. *Manage appropriations and assess program and district needs*
- B. *Optimize use and effectiveness of C.A.R.E.S*
- C. *Process, manage, and evaluate attorney billings*

GOAL 3: OCR will 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.

Strategies:

- A. *Cultivate a learning & practice environment that supports excellence in legal representation*
- B. *Deliver high-quality accessible training to advance best practices, address emerging topics in relevant fields, and implement OCR Core Competencies*
- C. *Assess attorney and case consultant education and support needs*
- D. *Maintain and disseminate current and relevant resources for attorney and case consultant use regarding relevant law, social science, and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) strategies*

Goal 1 Process and Metrics

Ensure children’s voice & interests are paramount throughout the proceedings and in the development of policy, law & practice

Following the 2020 release of OCR’s Engaging and Empowering Youth (“E&EY”) [Report](#) OCR has been working to implement various recommendations including:

- Increase youth attendance in court,
- Further incorporate youth feedback and youth voice into OCR policies and programming,
- Explore strategies to use youth surveys in the OCR attorney oversight processes (OCR explored use of the youth survey with renewing attorneys in 2021 & 2022).

To further incorporate youth voice and perspective into OCR’s policies and programming, OCR formed the Lived Expert Action Panel (LEAP), comprised of 8 young adults with lived experience in D&N, Juvenile Delinquency, and/or truancy systems. LEAP has been operating for one year and in that time they have co-facilitated and planned meetings, helped train GALs and other stakeholders, provided input and feedback regarding a variety of topics (including programming, legislation and policy), testified in support of HB22-1038 and HB22-1373, participated in state committees, helped collect youth surveys and planned events for the Colorado Youth Awareness Week.

OCR uses C.A.R.E.S to report on several areas related to youth voice, including reports to ensure attorneys are visiting children in placement in a timely manner and reports related to children in court. OCR is focusing on improving youth access to their legal proceedings, and according to OCR data from C.A.R.E.S, youth met with their judicial officer between July 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022, a total of 367 times through *in camera* interviews. This is a substantial increase from the previous year and may be based, in part, on OCR efforts to present district specific information about youth in court and discussing youth in court reports with individual attorneys during the renewal process.

Youth attendance at court, reflected in the chart below, is a complicated measure for 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, OCR believes that the agency and the child’s attorney are in a strong position to push this policy and effectuate change across the system.

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 FY22, OCR conducted 62 youth reference interviews regarding the 61 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.

To highlight the importance of the child’s voice throughout proceedings, OCR has included some measures from its Court Observation Forms, Stakeholder Feedback Surveys and youth outreach efforts in the chart below (see Oversight and Evaluation of Attorney Practice section for more information).

Goal 1: Provide children a voice in the Colorado legal system through effective attorney services and advocacy.												
<i>Ensure children’s voice & interests are paramount throughout the proceedings</i>	FY19		FY20		FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
# of youth events attended or sponsored	5	8	5	8	5	4	5	12	8		10	
# of youth surveys received	50	108	75	85	100	18	100	140	100		100	
% of renewing attorneys w/ at least 1 youth reference interview	60%	77%	65%	92%	95%	88%	95%	100%	95%		95%	
% of attorneys stated child’s position in court observations ²	70%	87%	80%	65%	85%	33%	85%	43%	90%		90%	
% of attorneys who indicated efforts to get child to attend in ct. observations ³	20%	13%	30%	12%	30%	8%	30%	4%	35%		40%	
Judicial Officers indicate attorney always/usually advises the Court of the child’s position ⁴	95%	87%	95%	90%	95%	99%	95%	99%	95%		95%	
% of youth over 12 who attended a benchmark, permanency, or review hearing	-	-	-	-	Est. Base line	19%	20%	20.4%	25%		30%	

² For youth 5 & older. This number cannot account for instances when a GAL may not state a position in accordance with the child’s wishes.

³ For youth who were not already present in court and are over 5 years of age.

⁴ Prior to FY19 this question was answered by all stakeholder participants (regardless of whether they regularly attended court) and beginning in FY19 only Judicial Officers answered this question.

% of youth report attorney talked to them about the right to go to Court ⁵	-	-	Est. Base line	62%	70%	63%	70%	83%	75%		80%	
% of youth report having contact with attorney 1/mo. or more	-	-	-	-	-	-	Est Base line	70%	75%		80%	
% of youth report they trusted their OCR attorney always/usually	-	-	-	-	-	-	Est Base Line	77%	80%		85%	
% of initial 30 day visits completed	-	-	-	-	100%	97%	100%		100%		100%	

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 may not be appropriate for another child. OCR concentrates its data collection on compliance with practice standards. OCR's efforts in practice assessment and data collection have received state and national attention.

Every year OCR establishes lists of attorneys eligible for OCR appointments in each of the 22 judicial districts. OCR uses a comprehensive evaluation strategy and [benchmarks](#) to ensure compliance with CJD and OCR practice standards as it establishes the eligibility lists. This evaluation strategy includes:

- Annual verification process
- Tri-annual renewal application process
- New attorney interviews
- Ongoing assessment, periodic reviews, and risk-based sampling of attorney activity

Each year, the 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

Attorney Qualifications & Practice Standards

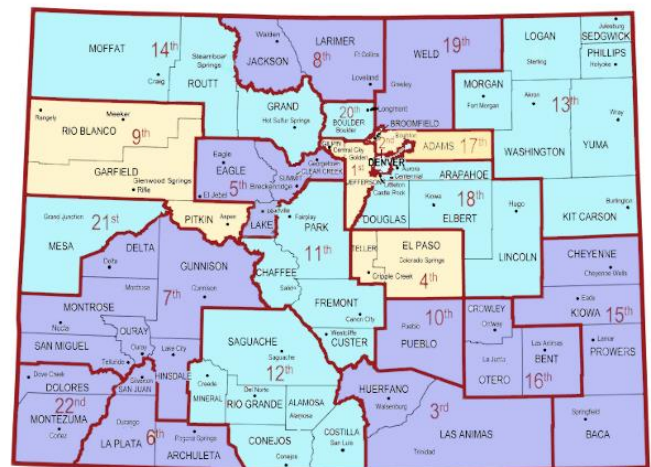
Expectations for attorneys under contract with OCR are set forth in statute, Chief Justice Directives (CJDs), OCR manuals and policies (available on our website) and in the OCR contract. CJD 04-06 sets forth practice standards and expectations for OCR attorneys; OCR makes recommendations to the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court on necessary changes, updates, or modifications to those standards.

⁵ This question changed slightly for FY22 when the youth survey was updated and streamlined. The concept in previous year reporting is similar.

completed, and verify malpractice insurance requirements. Every three years, 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.

The Annual Verification and Tri-Annual Renewal processes require review of the following data sources (those in bold only apply to the Tri-Annual Renewal process, with those in italics being explored beginning in FY21):

- D&N CJD Visit Report (to show compliance with the initial 30-day visit requirement in the CJD)
- Discipline Report
- Stakeholder Report
- Training Verification Form
- Formal Complaints
- Outstanding Issues Form
- **Court Observation Summary**
- **Case Reference Summary**
- **Writing Sample**
- **One on One Interview**
- ***Activity in Timeframe Report***
(snapshot of the first 45 days of each D&N appointment)
- ***Youth Surveys***



2022 2023 2024

Each verifying and renewing attorney is reviewed by a staff attorney who assesses any discrepancies between the data and the established benchmarks. Attorneys falling outside of the benchmarks are staffed by OCR. This process promotes consistency and transparency in OCR's contract decisions.

Surveys and Case Reference Interviews

OCR seeks judicial feedback for each verifying and renewing attorney through an annual survey. All responses to the survey are reviewed by OCR and responses reported in the chart below reflect answers of *strongly agree* or *agree* and are noted as "SFS". In FY22, OCR received a total of 239 survey responses concerning 177 attorneys.

OCR also communicates directly with youth, caregivers, and parents for each renewing attorney as mentioned previously. These case reference interviews are conducted with standardized scripts and provide meaningful feedback. In FY22, the OCR conducted 193 total reference interviews concerning the 61 attorneys under evaluation.

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

<i>Contract with attorneys based on data illustrating compliance with CJD and OCR practice standards</i>	FY18		FY19		FY20		FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
Attorney possesses relevant advocacy skills (SFS)	90%	91%	95%	90%	95%	92%	95%	99%	100%	99%	100%		100%	
Attorney possesses requisite knowledge (SFS)	92%	90%	95%	90%	95%	92%	95%	99%	100%	99%	100%		100%	
Attorney attends all court hearings ⁶ (SFS)	95%	97%	97%	96%	97%	96%	97%	99%	100%	99%	100%		100%	

Court Observations

Court observations, referenced above as part of the Tri-Annual Renewal process, employ separate standardized forms for dependency and neglect proceedings and juvenile delinquency proceedings. In FY22, the OCR conducted 214 observations involving 68 attorneys and 332 children/youth.

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

<i>Provide oversight and evaluation of attorney practice.</i>	FY18		FY19		FY20		FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
Appointed Attorney Personally Appeared	95%	95%	95%	94%	95%	96%	95%	97%	98%	95%	98%		98%	
Attorney provided current, independent information	85%	86%	90%	86%	90%	80%	90%	72%	90%	76%	95%		95%	

⁶ Beginning in 2020 this question is only answered by Judicial Officers.

Attorney Clearly Stated Position	90%	93%	95%	94%	95%	65%	95%	88%	95%	85%	95%		95%	
----------------------------------	-----	------------	-----	------------	-----	------------	-----	------------	-----	------------	-----	--	-----	--

Fair and Reasonable compensation

OCR is statutorily mandated, in C.R.S. §13-91-105, to establish fair and realistic rates of compensation to enhance the legal representation of children. OCR is immensely grateful to the Joint Budget Committee for approving an increase in the hourly rate paid to OCR Attorneys, from \$80/hour to \$85/hour for FY23. OCR will continue to monitor attorney rates and realistically assess the state budget in order to keep up with the cost of living increases and continue to attract and retain high-quality attorneys.

Case Consultant (CC) Program

Multidisciplinary law practice is a well-accepted best practice and the OCR strives to support the use of case consultants (CCs) in these cases. The use of CCs allows additional work on cases at a lower hourly rate, provides social science expertise to complement the attorney’s expertise and can enhance attorney contact with children/youth and other parties. The number of CCs working with contract attorneys increased slightly with 97 CCs currently active.

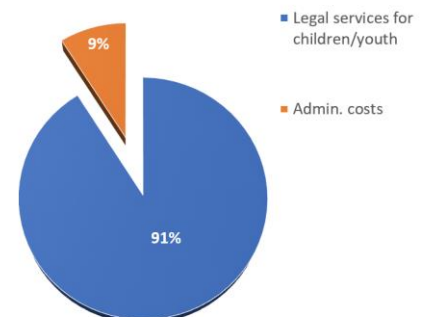
Additionally, OCR launched a program in FY21 to provide CCs to attorneys on a contract basis. This allows contract attorneys to request assistance on a case-by-case basis. Ten (10) contract CCs are currently providing services in this manner with four (4) more scheduled to start in July . OCR continues to work with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab to develop an evaluation plan for this program which will drive future goals and reporting.

Goal 2: Process and Metrics

Manage Appropriations and Assess Program Needs

OCR strives to be efficient and effective in utilizing its annual appropriation. OCR’s budget is driven largely by attorney activity and caseloads. The court appointed counsel (“CAC”) appropriation is driven strictly by caseload and workload of contractor’s billing. OCR does not control the number of appointments as these are made by the Court. In contrast, OCR does control non-CAC expenditures and endeavors to ensure these stay within the annual

FY 22 Administrative Expenditures (through 3/31/22)



allocation amount. In FY22 (through 3/31/2022), OCR used 91% of its expended funds for attorney services (including the CAC line item) and only 9% for administration. Through the first three quarters of the fiscal year, OCR has expended 65% of its appropriation and is **currently on track to be well within budget by the end of the fiscal year.**

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

The current C.A.R.E.S system launched on April 1st, 2018 to allow more streamlined billing, case management, and oversight through updated functions, better usability, new case alerts, better functioning on mobile devices, and built-in search technology. C.A.R.E.S was updated in early 2022 to increase performance speed and the user-friendliness of routine functions such as requesting additional funding or changing billing information. Upgrades also improved OCR's ability to track IV-E spending through a fully custom, rules-based engine; and improved cost-per-case reporting by allowing case consultants, mentors, and litigation support attorneys to request access to another office's appointment directly to enter their billing. OCR is currently working on the next round of enhancements to support client-directed representation and additional user-friendly innovations.

Periodic Review

OCR does a quarterly review of enhanced C.A.R.E.S reports including: a child count report to monitor the child cap, a quarterly 30-day initial visit report to ensure compliance with this component of the CJD, potential duplicate report, case consultants or paralegal in court, 12+ hours billed per day, 15+ hours billed on an appointment in a month, age maximum for D&N and risk sampling of high-cost contractors/appointments for the quarter.

Goal 2: The OCR will optimize efficiencies in attorney practice & billing												
Process, manage and evaluate contractor billing	FY19		FY20		FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
Non-CAC Expenditures stay within budgeted appropriation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Avg. # days from invoice submission to payment in state financial system	20	8.6	20	8.3	10	10	10	12	14		14	

Provide Litigation Support

Well supported and trained attorneys are more efficient and effective when representing a child's best interests. Many of the litigation supports provided by the OCR not only enhance the efficiency of OCR attorneys, but also ensures attorneys and CCs remain current in relevant subject matter areas as required by Goal 3. OCR provides the following litigation supports to our attorneys:

- Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID) book
- Litigation Toolkit
- Litigation Support List

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 Children's Justice Task Force in 2012 and rewritten in 2018, this robust and up-to-date 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 and blackletter law discussion and 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.

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 155 pleadings, 41 social science resources, and 70 practice tools available to contractors. The OCR added 102 new or updated documents to the Litigation Toolkit this year and will continue to update and add documents to ensure it remains current and comprehensive.

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.

OCR monitors attorney satisfaction with litigation support and training, among other programming, in an annual satisfaction survey administered in August of each year. In FY22, 53 attorneys covering 15 judicial districts completed the survey which is used for data below:

Goal 2: The OCR will optimize efficiencies in attorney practice and billing														
<i>Provide litigation support and facilitate practice innovations</i>	FY18		FY19		FY20		FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
% attorneys indicated very satisfied/satisfied with GRID	Est. Base line	91%	95%	88%	95%	100%	95%	99%	95%	100%	95%		95%	
% attorneys indicated very satisfied/satisfied with OCR Listserv	Est. Base line	74%	80%	84%	80%	96%	95%	96%	95%	98%	95%		95%	
Litigation Tool Kit forms/resources available online	Est. Base line	42	60	109	120	160	190	206	220	266	250		280	
% attorneys indicated very satisfied/satisfied with OCR Litigation Toolkit	Est. Base line	64%	70%	72%	75%	93%	95%	95%	95%	94%	95%		95%	

GOAL 3 Process and Metrics

Cultivate a learning and practice environment

In FY17, 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 our 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 FY23, the OCR will also offer a series of concentrated and comprehensive trainings covering three key core competencies that are likely to have the most positive impact on the outcomes of children, youth, and families, including:

- Client Directed Representation
- Justice for Youth
- Litigation Practice

Throughout all components of the training program, the OCR will infuse 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 will also address equity, diversity, and inclusion in all practice areas and case types.

In addition, 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 FY22, OCR established 17 mentoring pairs covering 7 judicial districts. OCR has also continued offering Westlaw, a comprehensive legal research tool, at no cost to its attorneys.

Provide relevant, high-quality training in state and federal law and regulations, social science research, and evidence-based programs.

The General Assembly charged 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, OCR will continue providing webinars at least once a quarter on the priority training areas or emerging topics related to child welfare practice. In addition, 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 FY22, OCR provided a total of 77 CLEs as follows:

- Core Competencies I
- OCR Annual Fall Conference
- Westlaw Edge Legal Research Training
- Addressing Domestic Violence in D&N Cases
- Foster Youth Transition Program
- Family First Prevention Services Act: Litigation & Advocacy Strategies for GALs
- Family First Prevention Services Act: Practice Considerations for Legal Professionals
- Family First & Juvenile Justice Reform in Colorado
- Human Trafficking 101
- Client-Directed Representation: Attorney Panel
- Core Competencies II
- Supporting Gender-Expansive Youth
- In Practice: Foster Youth in Transition Program
- GAL and CC Personal Safety in the Field
- Witnesses 101
- 10th Annual Excellence in Juvenile Defense Conference
- Using Experts in D&N Cases
- Using an Attachment & Bonding Expert in D&N Cases
- Trial Skills Training for GALs

At the end of FY22, OCR has a total of 424 hours of CLEs available online for easy accessibility to attorneys across Colorado. In addition to the state trainings offered, OCR paid registration fees for 38 contractors to attend the 10th Annual Excellence in Juvenile Defense, the National Association of Counsel for Children annual conference and the ABA Conference.

Goal 3: The OCR will ensure attorneys remain current in state and federal law and regulations, social science research and evidence-based services.

Require attorneys to meet minimum training requirements.	FY18		FY19		FY20		FY21		FY22		FY23		FY24	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
# of new CLE hours sponsored by OCR per year	Est. Base line	81	80	89	80	105.4	80	85	85		85		85	
OCR Attorneys Strongly Agree/Agree OCR training is tailored to meet the specialized needs of best interest attorneys	Est. Base line	93%	95%	96%	95%	95%	95%	98%	98%	94%	98%		98%	

Maintain and disseminate updates on developments in law and social science

As outlined in Goal 2, OCR uses a variety of strategies to ensure attorneys have the most up-to-date legal information and resources. In addition to the GRID and Litigation Toolkit detailed in Goal 2, the OCR Listserv and quarterly newsletters promote efficient and effective legal representation and ensure attorneys receive timely updates on new developments. OCR includes a case law and legislative update at least once a year at one of our sponsored trainings.

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 FY22, attorneys sent a total of 528 emails discussing 203 topics.

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 FY22, OCR published 4 newsletters.

Conclusion

OCR has made tremendous strides in advancing youth rights and youth voice in the last several years, culminating with the passage of HB22-1038. As OCR works to implement this important change, we hope to further infuse youth voice into our culture and these cases. As this work progresses, we anticipate youth-driven changes to our goals, data and reporting and embrace continued improvement and growth.

“She’s always on top of things and listened to what I needed instead of what other people think I needed”

“She cares, genuinely cares. I think that’s such a wonderful thing. She’s given me hope and humanity again in a system where most people don’t care and we are just numbers”

***– quotes from youth about their attorney
from the 2022 case references interviews***
