



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

Presentation to the Joint Judiciary Committee

January 11, 2024





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.

Vision

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

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.

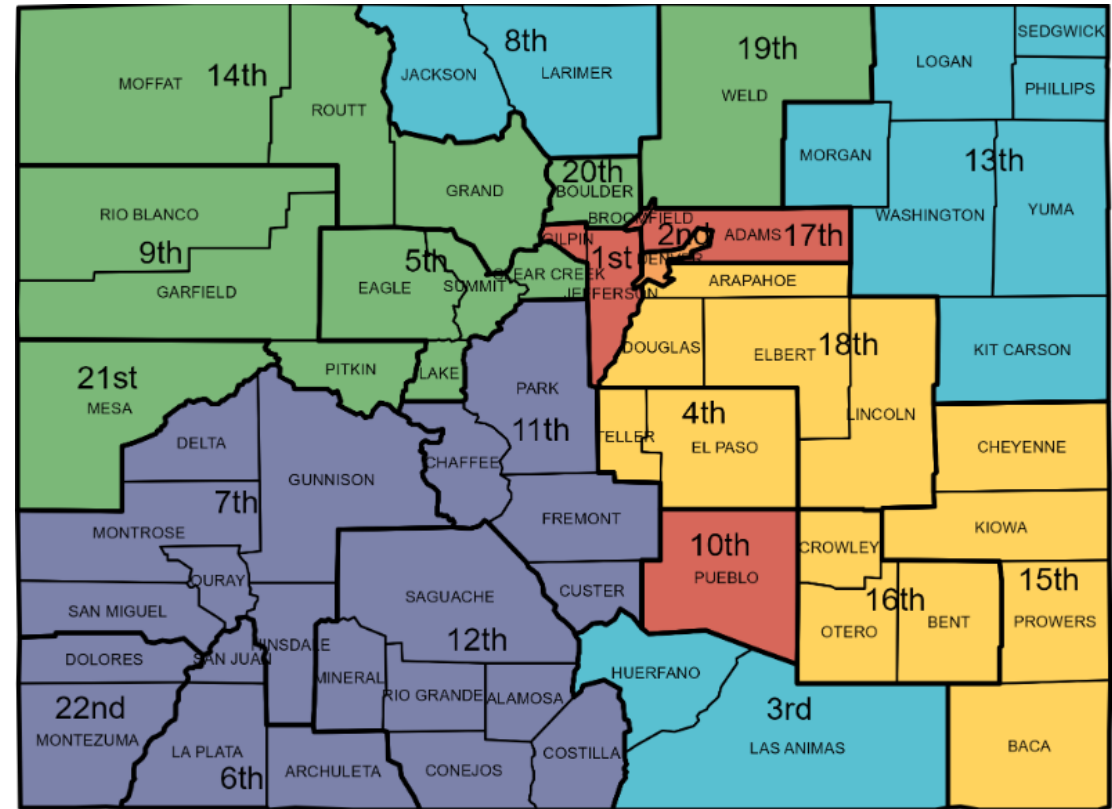
Empowerment: OCR cultivates an environment of respect and honesty. We value the diverse experiences and expertise of the children we serve, our attorneys, and our staff. We invest time to reflect and connect, focus on strengths, value feedback, and recognize success. We stand for justice and support each other in our mission to empower children.

Outstanding Children's Law Office Award



OCR Attorneys

- OCR contracts with approximately **285** attorneys and case consultants covering all 22 Judicial Districts.
- OCR employs **17** attorneys and case consultants in the El Paso Office.



OCR ATTORNEYS ARE APPOINTED IN 12 DIFFERENT CASE TYPES



Dependency
and Neglect

Minor
Parents

Foster Youth
in Transition
Program

Underage
Marriage

Juvenile
Delinquency &
Direct File

Domestic
Relations

Truancy

Paternity &
Child Support

Probate

Adoption &
Relinquishment

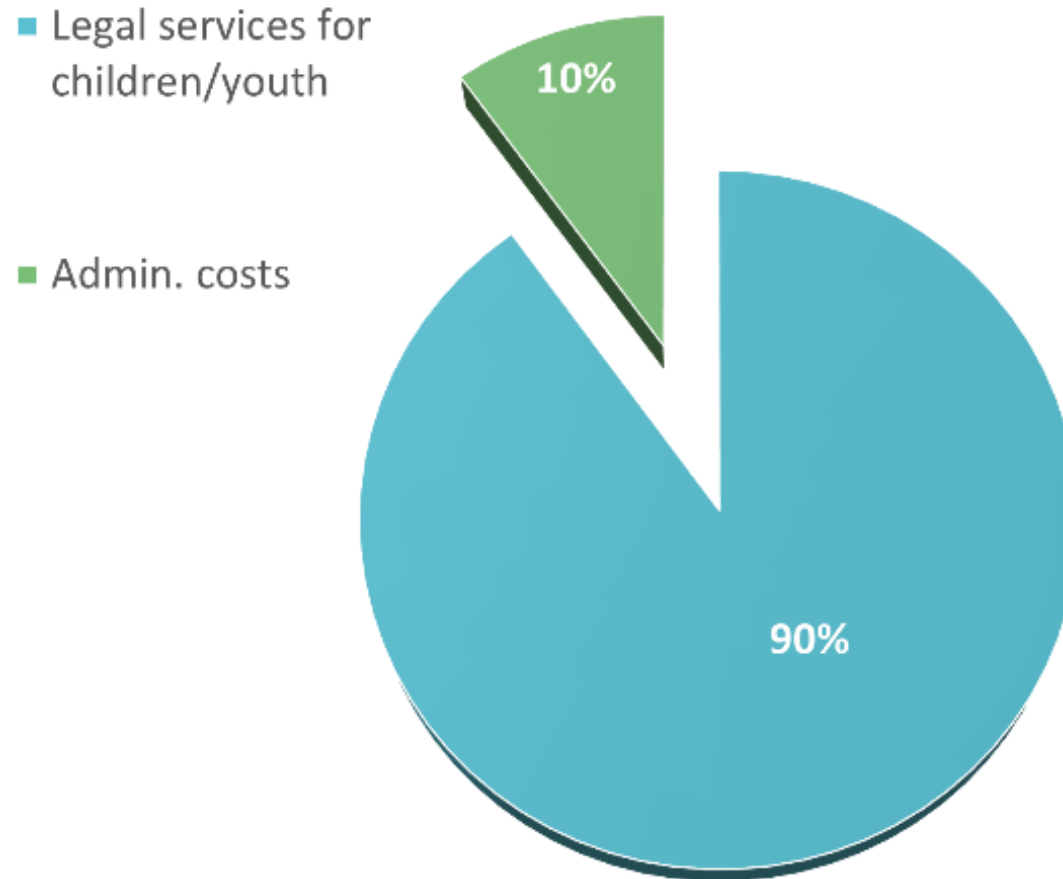
Mental Health

Victim/
Witness

- GAL or CFY is appointed for EVERY child or youth named in a D&N case in Colorado.
- CFY is appointed for every youth in a Foster Youth in Transition Program case.
- GALs are appointed for every youth 16 or 17 years of age applying for a marriage license.
- GALs are appointed for every youth in detention.
- GALs are appointed at the discretion of the court in all other case types.

Caseload Driven Budget

FY 23 Administrative Expenditures





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

WILDLY IMPORTANT GOAL (WIG)

OCR WILL FURTHER ADVANCE YOUTH RIGHTS IN COLORADO LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AND CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE RELATED POLICY INITIATIVES. YOUTH ENCOMPASSES THE AGES OF 0 – 21 YEARS OLD AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE IN AN INTENTIONAL EFFORT TO RECOGNIZE, DEFINE, PROTECT, AND ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS AND RIGHTS ON INDIVIDUAL CASES AND IN THE LAW AND POLICY ATTORNEYS RELY ON TO ADVOCATE FOR THOSE INTERESTS.

FY24 Goals and Strategies

GOAL 1:
PROVIDE CHILDREN AND YOUTH A VOICE IN THE COLORADO LEGAL SYSTEM THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ATTORNEY SERVICES AND ADVOCACY.

- a) Ensure children's and youth's voice and interests are paramount throughout the proceedings and in the development of policy, law, and practice.
- b) Provide and promote effective use of case consultant (CC) support to attorneys.
- c) Provide oversight and evaluation of attorney practice.
- d) Establish fair and reasonable compensation for OCR attorneys.
- e) Recruit and retain a sufficient pool of qualified attorneys to meet each district's needs.

GOAL 2:
OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCIES IN OCR OVERSIGHT AND BILLING.

- a) Manage appropriations.
- b) Optimize use and effectiveness of CARES.
- c) Process, manage, and evaluate attorney billings.

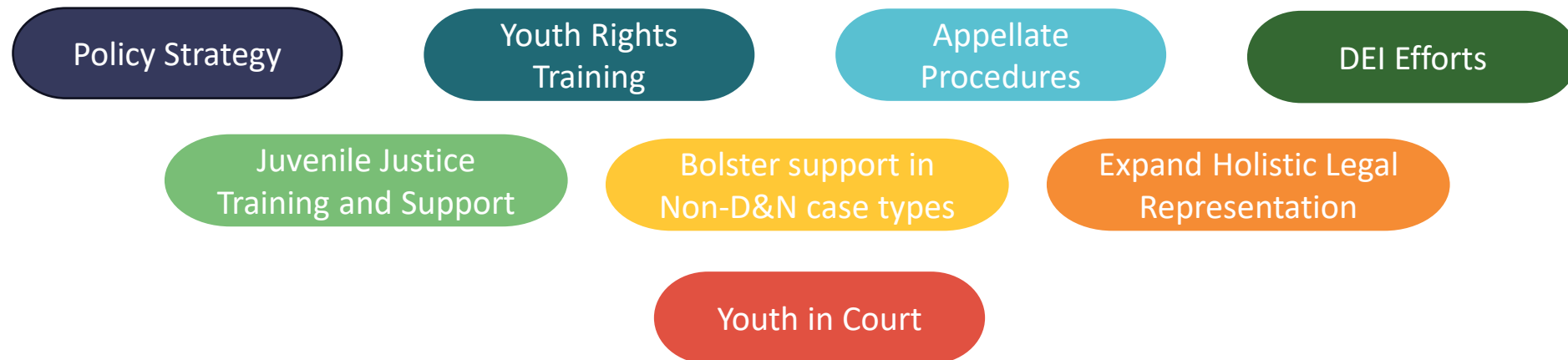
GOAL 3:
ENSURE ATTORNEYS AND CASE CONSULTANTS REMAIN CURRENT IN STATE AND FEDERAL LAW AND REGULATIONS, SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH, BEST PRACTICES IN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, AND EVIDENCE BASED SERVICES.

- a) Cultivate a learning and 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's 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 diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies.

FY24 WIG

OCR WILL FURTHER ADVANCE YOUTH RIGHTS IN COLORADO LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AND CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE RELATED POLICY INITIATIVES. *YOUTH ENCOMPASSES THE AGES OF 0 – 21 YEARS OLD AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE IN AN INTENTIONAL EFFORT TO RECOGNIZE, DEFINE, PROTECT, AND ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS AND RIGHTS ON INDIVIDUAL CASES AND IN THE LAW AND POLICY ATTORNEYS RELY ON TO ADVOCATE FOR THOSE INTERESTS.*

Strategies





Rights for Children and Youth in Foster Care

- Convert protections in 19-7-101 into rights with meaningful notice and enforcement mechanisms.
- Update the protections and align with regulations, federal law, and other states.
- Developed with LEAP.

Budget Overview

- R1 - Caseload/Workload Adjustment
- R2 - Training Assistant
- R3 - Classification and Compensation Study
- R4 - Non-Attorney Contractor Rate Increase

Budget Amendment - CARES

Caseload/Workload Adjustment

- Projected increase in discovery and transcript costs.
- While D&N appointments are projected to decrease, other case types are projected to increase.
- Workload has increased with increased litigation and case complexity.



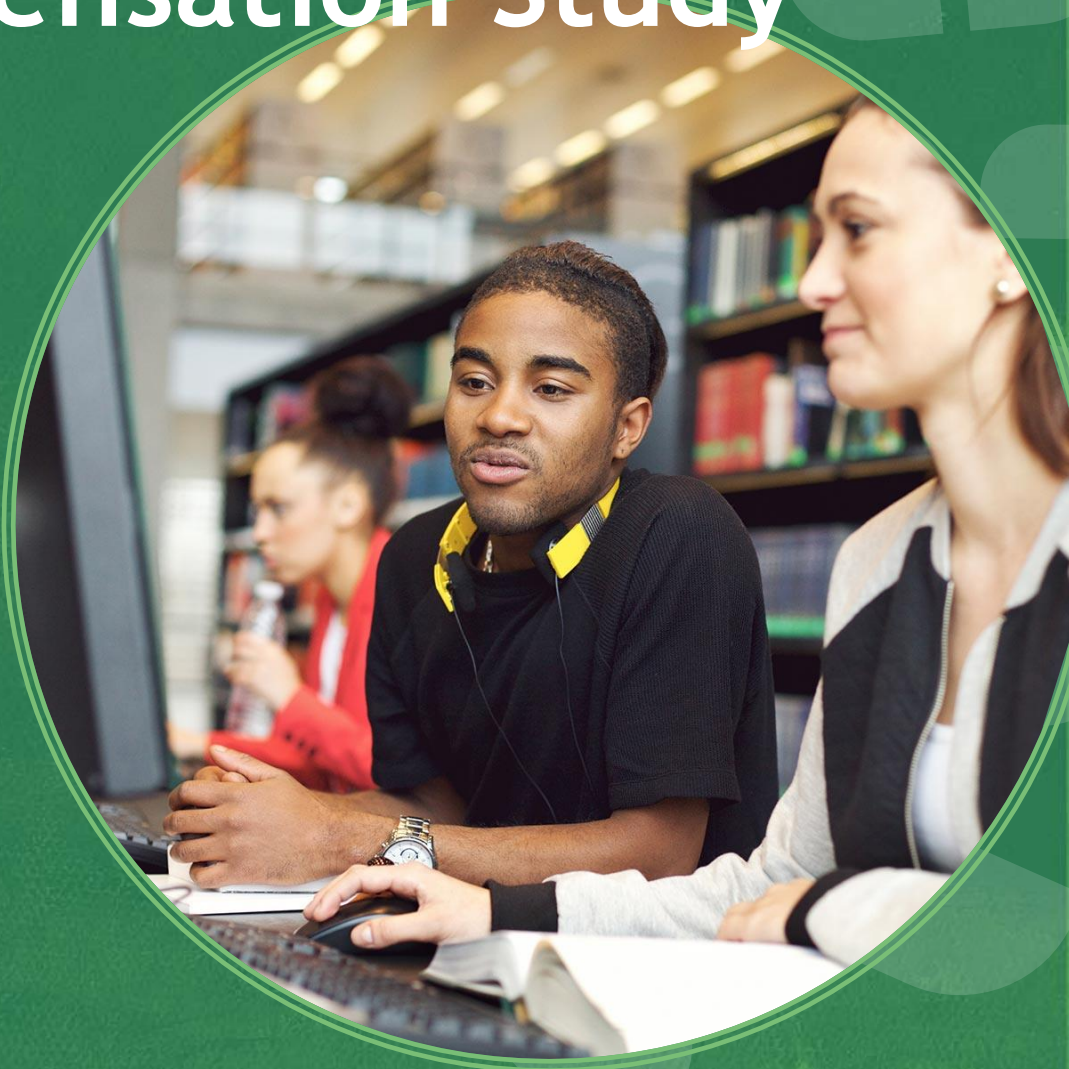
Training Assistant

- Legislative Mandate to ensure the provision and availability of high-quality, accessible training throughout the state.
- OCR has a robust training program.
- For over 20 years this has been accomplished with 1 FTE and it is no longer sustainable.
- Asking for **reappropriated IV-E funds** to add one additional FTE to assist.



Classification and Compensation Study

- OCR, ORPC, ADC contracted with a firm to conduct the first phase of a study, developing a classification and compensation plan.
- Goal is to ensure employees are placed in the midpoint of the new salary ranges identified.
- Will include both the Denver and El Paso offices.



Non-attorney Compensation

- Joint request from OCR, ORPC, and ADC to increase rates for paralegals and case consultants by 5% to match attorney increases.



CARES Replacement

- CARES is our proprietary case management and billing system.
- Anticipated a FY26 budget request due to age and architectural needs of the system.
- Just after budget submission a key engineer unexpectedly left.
- Accelerating the replacement timeline is more efficient and we are requesting reappropriated IV-E funds to do so.



Summary of OCR Requests

Request	General Fund	Reappropriated Funds
R1 – CAC Adjustment	\$913,269	-
R2 – Training Assistant	-	\$124, 812 (1 FTE)
R3 – Classification Study	\$422,148	\$109, 894
R4 – Non-Attorney Rate	\$121, 626	\$12, 744
Budget Amendment - CARES	\$100,000	\$1,500,000

Thank you!

Chris Henderson
Executive Director

chrishenderson@coloradochildrep.org



I don't feel like she treats me as her mandatory job or client she treats me like a human and person and makes sure I know I have her support. I never questioned if she would stand up for my best interest and what I wanted.

- Quote from a Youth in the 2023 Case Reference Interviews

