



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

# OCR Overview

Child Welfare Interim Study Committee

*June 27, 2023*





## 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, equitable, 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, honesty, and equity. 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.



# Legal Authority

- OCR created by the General Assembly in 2000 through HB00-1371 and began operating in 2001.
- Enabling Legislation and mandates are in C.R.S. 13-91-101 et seq.
- Became a permanent independent agency within the Judicial Branch in 2010.
- Practice is governed by Chief Justice Directive 04-06.

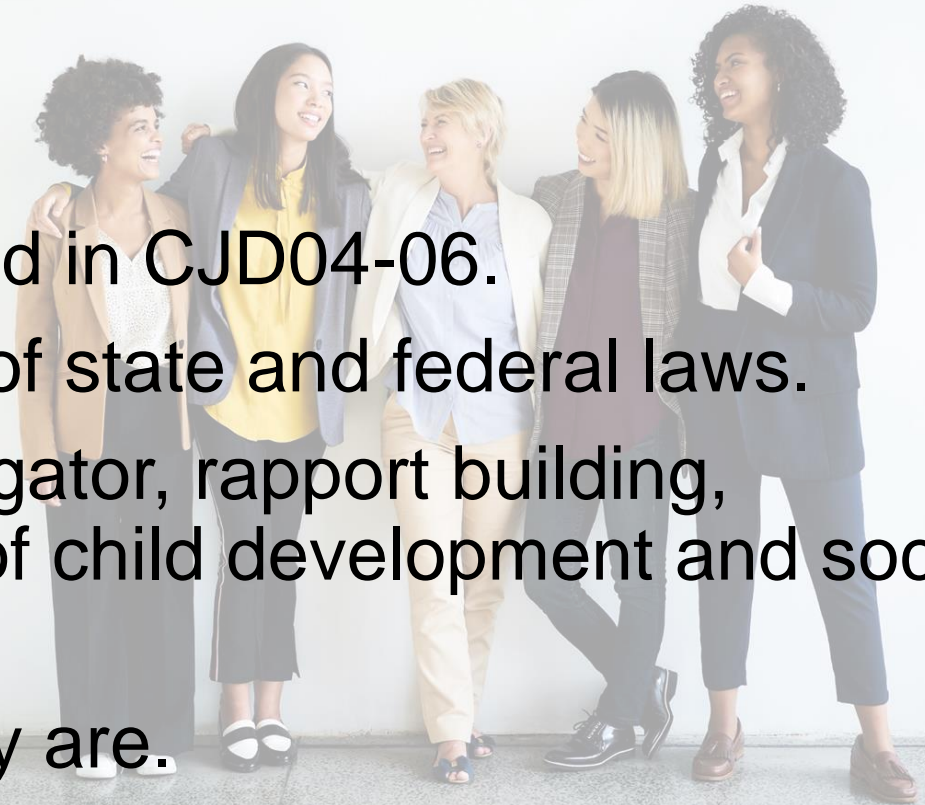
# OCR Overview

- Ensure provision of high-quality legal representation for children and youth.
- Provide oversight, training and support.
- Responsible for appointments in 12 different case types.
- Contract with 275 attorneys covering all 22 judicial districts.



# OCR Attorneys

- Independent Contract Model.
  - OCR Colorado Springs Office
- Held to practice standards outlined in CJD04-06.
- Knowledgeable in a wide variety of state and federal laws.
- Requires an eclectic skill set – litigator, rapport building, investigator, working knowledge of child development and social sciences.
- See the children/youth where they are.
- Only involved in cases that are opened in court.







## GAL

### Best Interests

- Professional Duties flow to best interests of the child
- Attorney advocates for what they have determined to be in the child's best interests.
- Child's position must be stated unless directed otherwise.
- May hold therapeutic privilege (if youth or parent is not appropriate to do so)
- May be GAL in multiple case types.



## Both Roles

- Provide Diligent representation
- Conduct independent investigation
- Provide legal advocacy throughout all stages of the proceeding
- Communicate and establish client relationship
- Attend staffings & meetings
- May work with CCs
- Provide conflict free legal representation

## CFY

### Client directed

- Professional Duties flow to the client ( for e.g., has a confidential relationship with the client).
- Attorney advocates for the youth's stated position.
- Attorney counsels youth to help them determine their position.
- May represent youth who hold their own therapeutic privilege.
- Coordinates with GAL in other case types (like JD).



# Children and Youth Represented

- Unique needs and situations of these young people.
- OCR attorneys give youth a voice in these proceedings.
- Youth events and surveys.
- OCR Lived Expert Action Panel (LEAP).



# OCR and Policy

- Provide expertise, collaboration, and advocacy.
- Aim to keep the focus on children and youth and the importance of maintaining and strengthening youth rights.
- You have built a strong foundation in Colorado over the years that recognizes children and youth as the focus of these considerations.





# Child Centered Policy Matters

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- OCR and its attorneys use the language you pass to fight for children and youth and their rights every day.
- The law you create is cited by attorneys in trial courts and motions practice. That work creates case law that is cited in appellate briefs.
- These are not just bills - they are the tools of our trade, and we wield them to advance children and youth rights and justice.

# Thank you!

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