



COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE

SMART Act Hearings

January 14, 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, equitable, inclusive, and transparent manner.

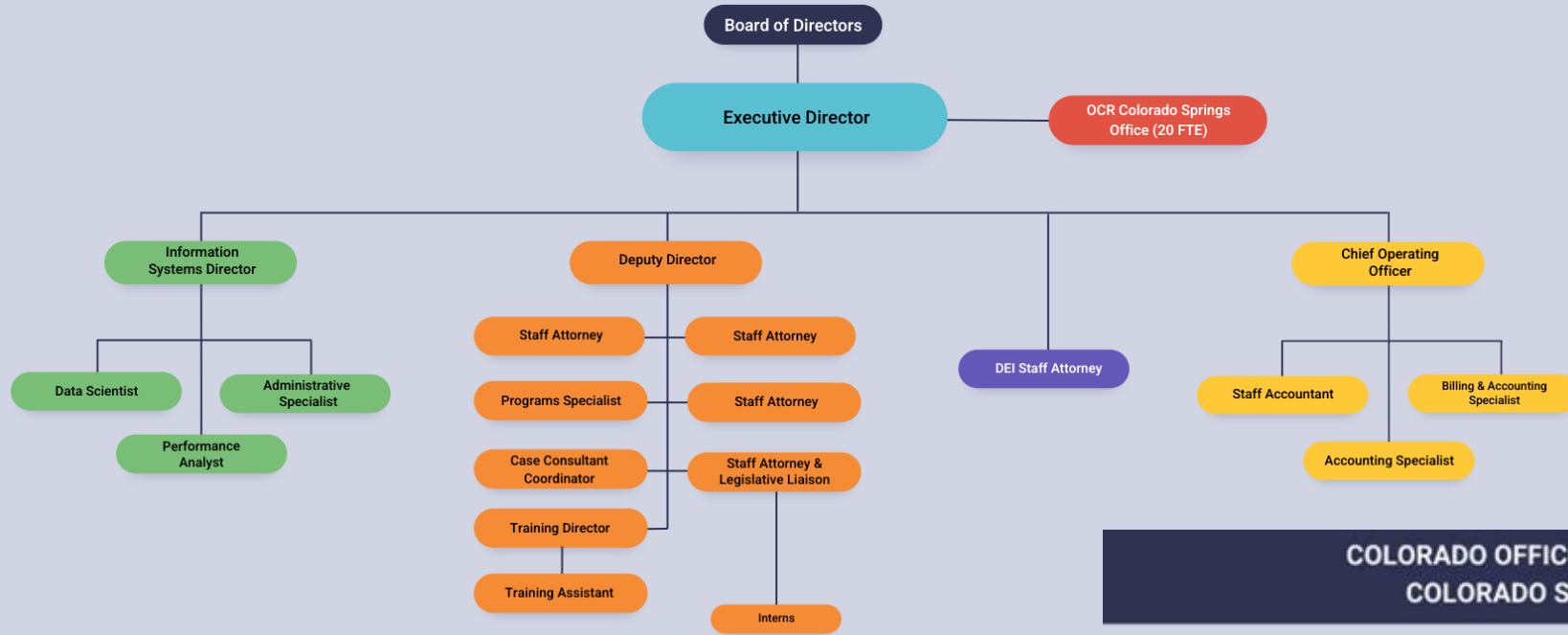
Efficiency

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.

COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE (OCR) DENVER OFFICE ORG. CHART (18 FTE)



COLORADO OFFICE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE (OCR) COLORADO SPRINGS OFFICE ORG. CHART (20 FTE)



Performance Plan FY25

Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

OCR will implement recent legislative changes establishing rights for children and youth in OCR cases to ensure that children and youth understand their rights and have attorneys who consistently engage in effective advocacy to seek equitable outcomes and protect and advance their rights.

While implementation of legislation is part of OCR's ongoing efforts each year, the recent volume of new legislation impacting OCR case types has amplified OCR's need to invest additional resources, focus, and time, raising it to a Wildly Important Goal for FY25.

Ongoing Goals:

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

Goal 2: OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCIES IN OCR OVERSIGHT AND BILLING.

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.

Rights for Youth in Foster Care

Training

Worked with Youth to create
the required Notice

Resources

Related Social Security
Advocacy

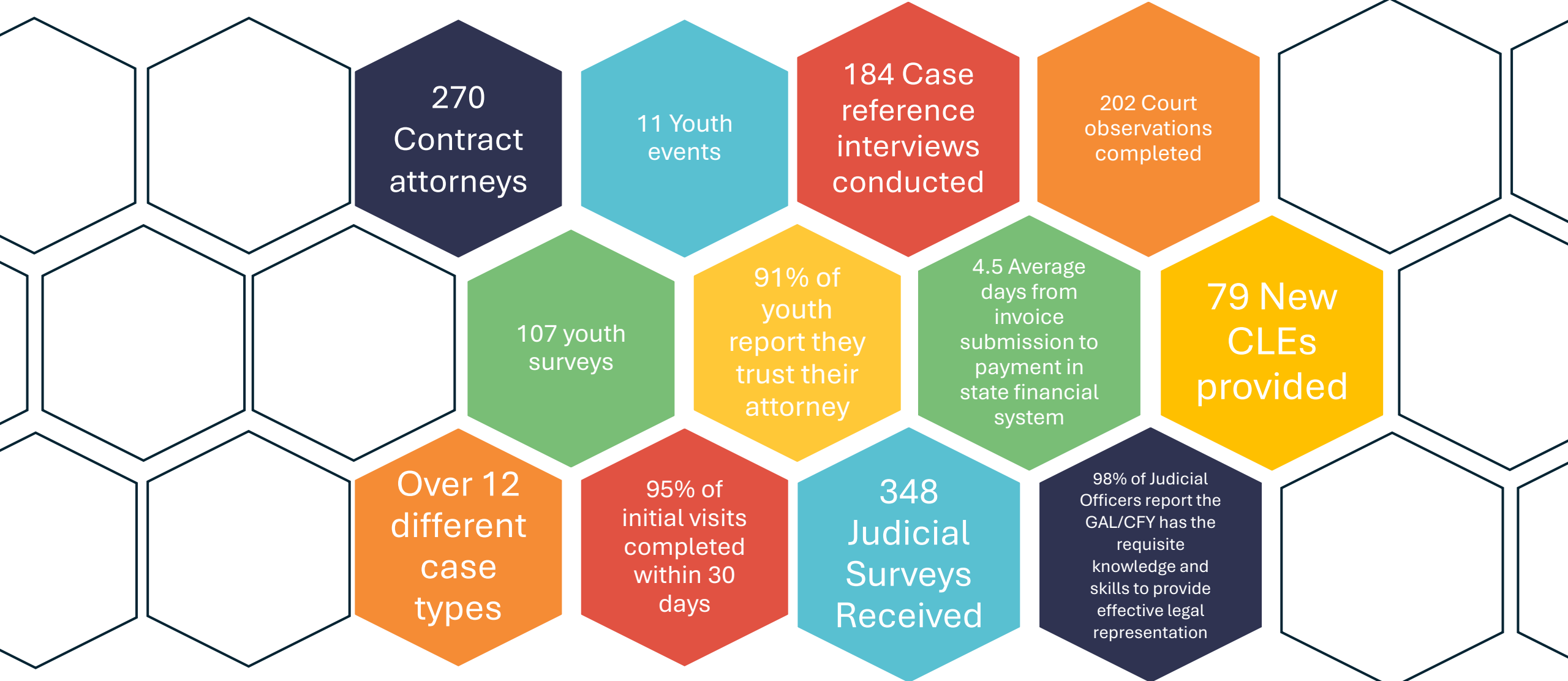
Associated Rules



Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID)

<https://coloradochildrep.org/attorneys/grid/>

Some Performance Plan Numbers



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

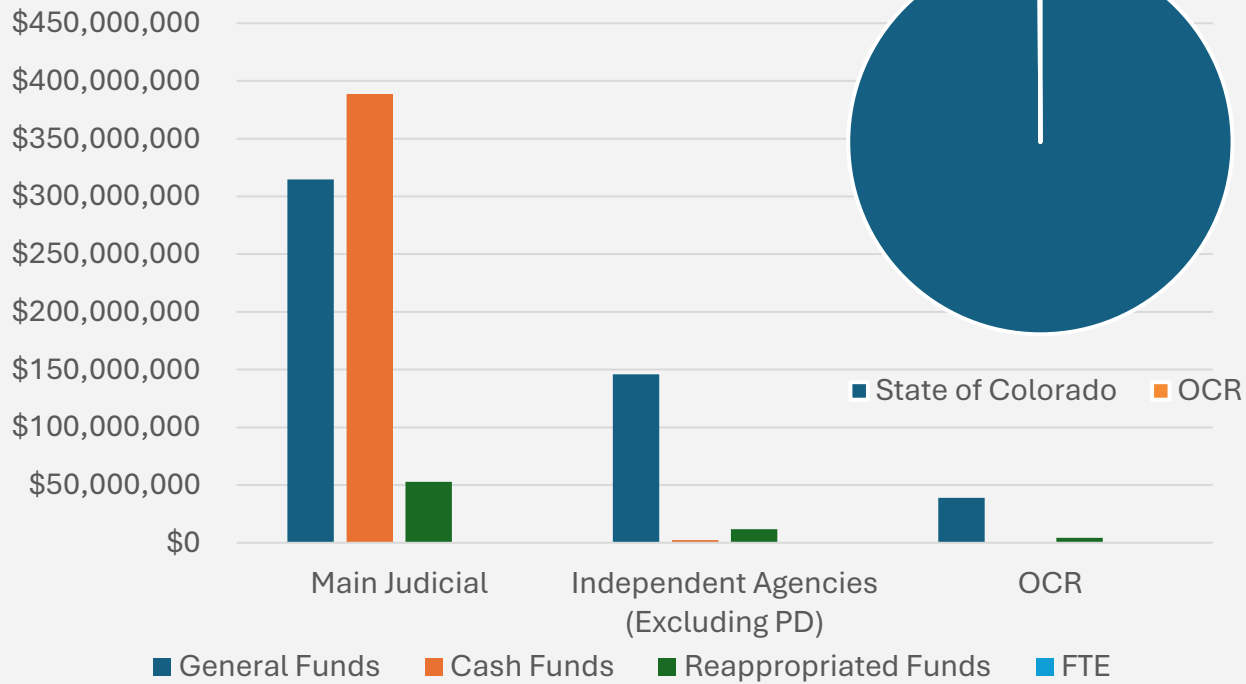
Adoption &
Relinquishment

Mental Health

Victim/
Witness

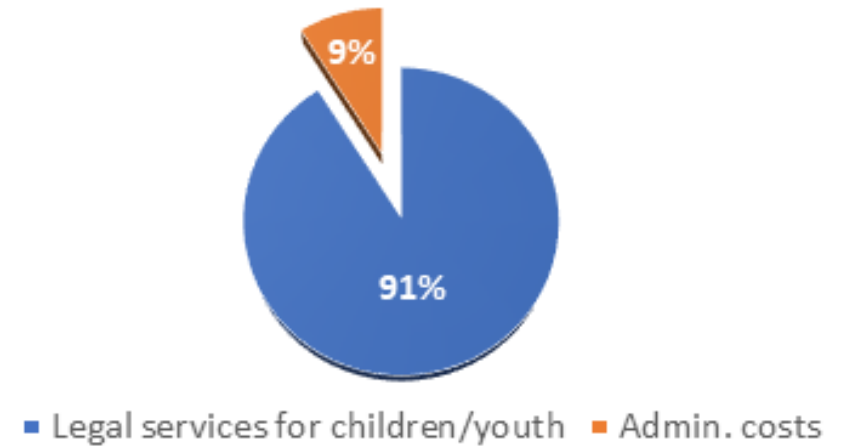
- GAL or CFY is appointed for EVERY child or youth named in a D&N case in Colorado.
- CFY is appointed for every youth in a Foster Youth in Transition Program case.
- GALs are appointed for every youth 16 or 17 years of age applying for a marriage license.
- GALs are appointed for every youth in detention.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

Budget Comparison



- Independent Agencies make up 4.1% of Statewide General Fund
- Of that 4.1% OCR receives less than 1/3.
- In terms of scale, we are a very small piece of the pie.
- Use our small slice primarily for Court Appointed Counsel.

FY 24 Administrative Expenditures (through 6/30/24)



FY26 Budget Requests



Request withdrawn after receipt of first quarter data.

Savings to the General Fund of \$41,303.

- Requesting to take a current admin position in El Paso Office, reclassify the position, change the associated duties, and move it to the Denver office.
- Use reappropriated funds to pay for this position going forward.





Considerations

- Attorneys make substantially less than private sector attorneys and are currently paid only 61% of the CJA rate for federal contract attorneys.
- Attorneys have legal and ethical obligations, and OCR cannot simply reduce attorney workload without compromising these critical requirements.
- Appointments are statutory or at the discretion of the Judicial Officer and not within the control of OCR.
- OCR has robust protocols to ensure the integrity of attorney billing and compliance with applicable practice standards.

Legislative Agenda



“She was the first person to really listen to me in my entire life. [Others] didn’t really believe me or care. [My attorney] listened and cared. She wasn’t afraid to stand up to my caseworker for me. She also taught me to be brave enough to talk to the Judge and ask for help. She saved me and my whole life is different because of it.”

~ Youth feedback regarding their GAL/CFY



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THANK YOU!

Questions?

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