

## **The Office of the Child's Representative**

### **Core Competencies II: Advanced Training for New Attorneys March 22, 2019**

#### **SESSION TOPICS AND SPEAKER BIOS**

##### **1. Overview of Permanency Hearing / *Chris Henderson, Esq., OCR Executive Director***

This session will provide an overview of permanency, including applicable law, purpose, youth voice, and any permanency considerations.

**Chris Henderson** has dedicated his legal career to children's issues. His legal practice has focused on representing children's best interests in dependency and neglect and delinquency proceedings. In 2016, he founded and was the managing partner of Child Advocates of Colorado. Mr. Henderson has provided strategic leadership and directed operations for a team of attorneys, social workers and support staff to provide quality multidisciplinary representation for hundreds of children involved in the court system. Prior to relocating to Colorado, Mr. Henderson was a staff attorney with the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles where he represented numerous children and served as lead attorney for the first dependency drug court in Los Angeles County. Before attending law school, Mr. Henderson was a therapist for children and adolescents, providing therapy for in-patient children and adolescent psychiatric patients. In July 2018, Mr. Henderson was selected by the Board of Directors to be the new Executive Director. Mr. Henderson attended Colorado State University, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in 1994. He obtained a Masters of Arts Degree from the University of Denver in 1998. He received his Juris Doctor Degree from Whittier Law School in 2004 graduating *summa cum laude*.

##### **2. Permanency Goals – 30 minute sessions**

###### **(1) Return Home / *Meghan Scott, Esq.***

This session will focus on the permanency goal of Return Home and how you as the GAL can utilize the Children's Code and Volume 7 in your advocacy around this goal. In addition, there will be practice tips and materials you can take away to implement into your practice.

**Meghan Scott** has been a practicing Guardian ad Litem in Colorado since 2011. Meghan is a 3rd generation Colorado native and has played a role in the child welfare community in various capacities since 2005. Prior to becoming a licensed attorney, Meghan served as a CASA in Boulder County, clerked with Juvenile Court Judicial Officers, interned with GAL's and RPC's, and served as the OCR's Summer Law Clerk in 2010. Meghan always knew she wanted to practice as a GAL and landed her dream job right out of law school with the Office of Guardian Ad Litem in El Paso County. Here, Meghan practiced for nearly five years as GAL in D&N and JD cases. In El Paso County, Meghan served as a member of the planning committee for Educating Children of Color and the Lawyers Planting Trees Project. In January 2016, Meghan left the Office of Guardian Ad Litem to become a contract GAL in the 19th JD (Weld County) where she continues to practice as a GAL in all OCR case appointment categories.

###### **(2) Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA) / *Anna Hall-Owen, Esq.***

Is Emancipation really *not* permanency for some youth? This session will focus on OPPLA as a permanency goal, including state guidelines and regulations. The discussion will also include benefits for emancipating youth, Chafee benefits, Medicaid, college tuition and FAFSA, and the pros and cons to consider for emancipating youth.

**Anna Hall-Owen** has worked as a Guardian ad Litem and family law attorney in the 11th Judicial District of Colorado for over 25 years. Anna is a strong advocate for children and was herself an emancipated youth before passage of the Chafee Act. She graduated from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas in 1989 before attending St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas. She graduated from law school in 1992 and moved to Colorado to begin her law practice, which is still located in Canon City.

**(3) Allocation of Parental Responsibilities, Guardianship, R-GAP / Ashley Chase, Esq., OCR Staff Attorney & Legislative Liaison**

This session will review the permanency options of guardianship, APR and R-GAP and answer any practice questions presented by participants.

**Ashley Chase** is a Child Welfare Law Specialist who practiced as a Guardian ad Litem in Weld County for 10 years, earning the Jim Covino Advocate of the Year (2010), being a COBALT graduate in 2014 and was a member of the Best Practices Team of the Year (2017). She joined the Colorado Office of the Child's Representative in 2017 as a Staff Attorney and Legislative Liaison and continues to advocate for children and support GALs across the state.

**(4) Adoption / Traci Streifer, Esq.**

This session will cover adoptions, from the basics of timelines, legal criteria for adoption, and subsidies, to statutory requirements concerning ICWA and ICPC. We will also discuss the growing issue of foster parent vs family permanency decisions as they relate to adoptions, and the question of APR vs adoption. Finally, if there is time, we will discuss the effect of the growing number of appeals and how that affects the adoption process.

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding the basic legal framework for the adoption process in Colorado
- Navigating the competing interests between family and foster parents in decisions regarding adoption.
- APR vs adoption
- Making sure the child's voice is heard regarding adoption.

**Traci Streifer** graduated from Hastings College of Law in San Francisco in 1985 and worked as a Deputy District Attorney and civil litigator until moving to Colorado in 2001. After six years as a foster parent for Arapahoe County she became a GAL combining her passions for litigation and protecting and empowering children. She currently works as a GAL in Douglas County.

**3. Preparing for Termination Hearings / Ashley Chase, Esq., OCR Staff Attorney & Legislative Liaison**

In this session we will review termination hearings from start to finish, including preparation, use of witnesses, and exploration of common themes.

**Ashley Chase** is a Child Welfare Law Specialist who practiced as a Guardian ad Litem in Weld County for 10 years, earning the Jim Covino Advocate of the Year (2010), being a COBALT graduate in 2014 and was a member of the Best Practices Team of the Year (2017). She joined the Colorado Office of the Child's Representative in 2017 as a Staff Attorney and Legislative Liaison and continues to advocate for children and support GALs across the state.

**4. Juvenile Delinquency: Practice Tips, Q&A, and GAL Feedback / Ashley Graff, Esq., Jeff Ruff, Esq., Ranee Sharshel, Esq.**

This session will cover common questions presented by new GALs specific to delinquency cases, practice tips and the nuances of the role of the GAL in delinquency cases.

**Ashley Graff** started her career as a public defender in Fort Collins. She spent 5 years as a public defender, primarily handling the JD docket the last 3 years. In 2015, she transitioned to a role as a GAL and has handled JV, JD, and truancy cases the last 4 years. She currently practices in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District (Jefferson County).

**Ranee Sharshel** currently practices as a Guardian *ad litem* primarily in Arapahoe County. Her practice has focused on Guardian *ad litem* work for the past 20 years and Ranee continues to find it challenging and rewarding. Ranee obtained her law degree from Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark in Portland Oregon in 1998. Her passion for working with children and youth has always been present and participation in a street law program through law school continued to build on that, pushing her in a child focused area of law. Ranee has represented the best interests of children in Truancy, Delinquency and Dependency and Neglect Courts and has practiced in the area of family law as well. Ranee was one of the founding partners of the Arapahoe county multi-disciplinary office which was created in 2011. Ranee left the office returning to solo practice in 2018. She has participated in multiple committees and teams throughout her career including the best practice team and JSO Task Force. In 2016 Ranee received the Raymond Frenchmore award for Outstanding Contribution to the Juvenile Justice System from the Arapahoe County Bar Association.

**5. Placement and Permanency Considerations – 30 minute Sessions**

**(1) Child Safety: Assessments and Planning / Cara Nord, Esq., OCR Staff Attorney**

Participants will explore elements of safety assessments and safety plans and apply those elements to a case scenario.

**Cara Nord** became interested in children's issues over 20 years ago when she wrote an original oratory about child abuse for her junior high forensics team. After earning a Bachelor of Arts *magna cum laude* in American Politics and Philosophy/Prelaw, Cara taught fourth grade in Washington, D.C. through Teach for America. Her teaching experiences afforded her the opportunity to attend law school on a full-tuition public interest scholarship. During law school, Cara interned at a public defender's office where she represented children in At-Risk Youth (ARY) and Child in Need of Services (CHINS) proceedings, interned with TeamChild, and completed Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) training. After graduating from law school *summa cum laude*, Cara clerked for the Washington State Supreme Court and volunteered as a Big Sister. She then spent over 10 years litigating child welfare trials and appeals as an Assistant Attorney General in Washington State and as an Assistant County Attorney in Colorado. Cara joined OCR in February 2017. She enjoys legal research and writing, facilitating interactive trainings, and addressing race/class disparities.

(2) **Substance Use** / *Anne Auld, Director of Programs, Illuminate Colorado*

This session will address GAL questions related to the impact of substance use on families, and how child welfare, including GALs, can promote protective factors to support families and mitigate risks.

**Anne Auld** serves as the Director of Programs of Illuminate Colorado, a strategic partnership between the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, Prevent Child Abuse Colorado, Sexual Abuse Forever Ending (SAFE), and the Colorado Chapter of the National Organization for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. Ms. Auld is an authorized trainer in Darkness to Light, Stewards of Children; certified trainer in Kempe Center Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Prevention of Sexually Abusive Behaviors in Childhood and Adolescence; Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development; Overcoming Barriers to Preventing Child Sexual Abuse; Bringing the Protective Factors to Life, and The Period of PURPLE Crying® from the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome. She is a contracted trainer for the Colorado Child Welfare Training System on substance use and child maltreatment and is a certified ACE Master Trainer. She has presented at national and international conferences on related issues.

(3) **Parental Developmental Disabilities** / *Stacey Nickolaus, Esq.*

This session will cover common issues that arise when one or both parents have developmental disabilities, including treatment planning and communication.

**Stacey Nickolaus** has been practicing law in the Denver Metro area since 1998. She received her undergraduate degree from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado and her J.D. from the University of Denver College of Law. Stacey has focused the majority of her career serving families and children in Colorado. Much of her caseload is devoted to representing children and parents in Dependency and Neglect cases. Stacey is one of a handful of attorneys who represent Respondent Parents in Jefferson County's Family Integrated Treatment Court (a specialized substance abuse treatment court for families involved in the Dependency and Neglect system). Stacey also represents juveniles in delinquency cases and has served the Court as a Child and Family Investigator. Stacey is a Mediator, serving primarily in domestic relations cases.

Stacey has been involved in several community improvement programs and has been recognized by the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Bar Association for her efforts. Stacey has received The George Holley Young Lawyer Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Practice of Law, as well as the Excellence in Practice Award for her dedication to helping the children of Colorado and her outstanding leadership in the child welfare field. Most recently, Stacey received the prestigious Linda T. Palmieri Award for Outstanding Service on Behalf of Children.

(4) **Implicit Bias: Definition, Some Effects, and Some Fixes** / *Cara Nord, Esq., OCR Staff Attorney*

During this interactive session, participants will explore the definition of implicit bias through viewing a video and completing an exercise, discuss some effects implicit bias may have on Colorado children and families, and consider ways to counteract implicit bias.

**Cara Nord** became interested in children's issues over 20 years ago when she wrote an original oratory about child abuse for her junior high forensics team. After earning a Bachelor of Arts *magna cum laude* in American Politics and Philosophy/Prelaw, Cara taught fourth grade in Washington, D.C. through Teach for America. Her teaching experiences afforded her the opportunity to attend law school on a full-tuition public interest scholarship. During law school, Cara interned at a public defender's office where

she represented children in At-Risk Youth (ARY) and Child in Need of Services (CHINS) proceedings, interned with TeamChild, and completed Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) training. After graduating from law school *summa cum laude*, Cara clerked for the Washington State Supreme Court and volunteered as a Big Sister. She then spent over 10 years litigating child welfare trials and appeals as an Assistant Attorney General in Washington State and as an Assistant County Attorney in Colorado. Cara joined OCR in February 2017. She enjoys legal research and writing, facilitating interactive trainings, and addressing race/class disparities.

**6. Appellate Review / *Josi McCauley, Esq.***

The presentation will focus on appellate litigation in dependency and neglect cases and will include an update on relevant case law since July 2018.

**Josi McCauley** attended the University of Colorado School of Law and has dedicated her career to the practice of juvenile law since that time. Josi began working as a Guardian ad Litem in 2006 in dependency and neglect, delinquency, and probate matters, in addition to acting as a child's legal representative in domestic relations cases. She has served as the 8th Judicial District Juvenile Drug Court Guardian ad Litem. Josi is a current member of OCR's Litigation Support Team specializing in appeals and providing assistance with litigation strategy to all Guardians ad Litem. Josi is certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist and sits on the Best Practice Team for the 8th Judicial District, The Larimer County Interagency Oversight Group, and is the Juvenile Law Section Representative on her local bench/bar committee.