



CIVIL LEGAL AID OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

**MEETING OF
March 14, 2025**

MATERIALS



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MEETING MATERIALS

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TAB 1

CIVIL LEGAL AID OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

March 14, 2025

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Via [Zoom Link](#)

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair Sanchez)
2. Occupied Land Acknowledgment and Recognition of Responsibility (TBD)
3. Approval of December meeting minutes (Chair Sanchez)
4. Civil Legal Needs Study Update (Sara Robbins, Director)
5. State Budget Update (Stefanie Powell, Director of Operations)
6. Legislative Update (Sara Robbins, Director)
7. Public Comment/New Business
8. Adjourn

TAB 2

**CIVIL LEGAL AID OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE MEETING OF
December 6, 2024
DRAFT MINUTES**

Pursuant to notice duly provided in advance, the quarterly meeting of the Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee was held virtually through Zoom on Friday, December 6, 2024.

Members Participating: Chair Alejandro (Ale’) Sanchez, Judge Faye Chess, Megan Johnston, Rep. My-Linh Thai, Judge Janet Chung, Natasha Damien, Senator Yasmin Trudeau, Angela Cruz Boldt

Members Not Participating: Senator Drew MacEwen, Rep. Greg Cheney

OCLA Staff: Sara Robbins (Director), Hope Hough (Support Team), Annalise Martucci (Program Director), Philippe Knab (Program Director), Jeff Adams (Children’s Representation Training and Operations Manager), Bailey Zydek (Program Director), Stefanie Powell (Director of Operations), Beth Leonard (Civil Legal Aid Program Counsel), Nick Guzman (CRP Client Voice & Community Impact Coordinator), Ali Kingston (Eviction Defense Program Manager)

Guests: Michael Terasaki (PBC), Melissa Wolkenhauer (Tacomaprobono), Malou Chevez (NWIP), Eva Wescott (NJP), Erin Shea McCann (community member), Vanna Sing (ATJ Board), Cameron Buhl (Attorney), Jim Bamberger (community member)

The meeting convened at 11:32 a.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Sanchez welcomed members and invited them to introduce themselves. He then invited OCLA staff and guests to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes of September 27, 2024, Meeting

Chair Sanchez invited a motion to approve the September 27 meeting minutes.

1st Motion: Megan Johnston

2nd Motion: Rep. Thai

Action: Approved (Judge Chess abstained from the vote because she wasn’t yet present)

3. Oversight Committee and Legal Aid Community Feedback (Chair Alé Sanchez)

Request to Oversight Committee from the Washington State Bar Association to give feedback on their DEI Council's equity and justice plan. Without consensus, will consider at another time whether or not the Committee wants to be involved in this request.

4. Occupied Land Acknowledgment and Recognition of Responsibility (Angela Cruze Boldt, Oversight Committee Member)

Angelea Cruze Boldt provided the land acknowledgment, acknowledging the lands of the Cowlitz Tribe as well as her Washington tribe which is the Quinault Indian Nation.

5. Vice Chair Role (Chair Alé Sanchez)

Angela Cruz Boldt volunteered to serve in the Vice Chair role. Her bio indicates that:

She is a second-generation system lived expert and has been actively involved in her community from state to legislative. She is also a voting member of the Children Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup, a WAThrive participant, a Foster Leader collaborator with the Foster Caucus, and will be working on three bill revisions with a policy advisor from D.C. in January 2025.

In her past work, she assisted the Washington State Department for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) on new rulemaking for Washington State and the Reconciliation Families Act. She also served on the pilot ReEntry program from 2016 for ESD Cowlitz County collaboration and was voted Youth Tri-Lead for the Family, Youth, System Partner Roundtable and Youth Council for the Youth WorkForce Development Council. She has assisted and created youth organizations groups for lived experts in Washington.

Chair Sanchez invited a motion to approve Angela Cruz Boldt as Vice Chair of the Oversight Committee.

1st motion: Judge Janet Chung

2nd motion: Judge Faye Chess

Action: Approved

6. Civil Legal Needs Study Update (Megan Johnston, Committee Member)

The goal of the Scoping Committee is to develop guidance to assist OCLA in drafting the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the civil legal needs study. The Scoping Committee has discussed (1) the value of the public survey data and the quantity of data that has been collected in the earlier studies and (2) how useful it has been in delineating volume of civil legal needs that low-income Washingtonians have and what types of issues they are facing.

There was discussion around the following questions:

- What data or information would help OCLA and our state make policy and funding decisions to meet Washingtonians' civil legal needs?
- What equity consideration should the Scoping Committee consider while doing their work?

Feedback included:

- Meeting the needs of people who are reentering and who are currently incarcerated, with a specific focus on mental health and equity.
- Ask people who are impacted on a daily basis what they need.
- What marginalized communities use civil legal aid the most?
- What communities in our state have representation and which do not, and what's working for them and what's not?
- What is the process of minimizing personal, professional, and implicit bias that the system has built in and how are those in positions of leadership working to improve this?
- Understand how people are/are not connecting to legal services in order to look for opportunities to provide those services in new and different ways.
- Language access and intersectionality of different identities.

Feedback can also be emailed to mjohnston@resolutionwa.org

7. Legislative Involvement Policy-Informational (Sara Robbins, OCLA Director)

At a meeting in March, we had a brief conversation about an Oversight Committee policy regarding legislative involvement. The Committee agreed that the policy was better suited as an OCLA agency policy rather than an Oversight Committee policy. A copy is included in the meeting packet that explains the OCLA director and staffs' role during the legislative session and the things OCLA advocates for.

8. State Budget Update (Stefanie Powell, Director of Operations)

Sara Robbins indicated that when she submitted the OCLA decision package, she was very conservative in her approach and outlined the need to maintain the current level of work.

Stefanie Powell indicated that less than 5% of OCLA's budget goes to overhead and administration. Salaries and benefits are only about 3% of the budget, and OCLA's operating expenses are an extremely small part of the budget. As a result, approximately 95% of the budget goes to direct programming to help individuals in the state.

Currently, the state is anticipating a deficit of \$14 billion over the next four years. The executive branches of government have received communications from the governor on how they would like to take budget reductions. Realizing that the strategies communicated wouldn't be sufficient to help close the budget deficit, a spending freeze was put in place for hiring, goods and services, and travel for executive branch agencies.

OCLA, as an independent judicial branch agency, is not directly impacted by that guidance. However, OCLA wants to be a good steward of state resources. As a result, OCLA is reviewing program budgets and procedures to identify programs mandated by the legislature. OCLA is also reviewing internal policies and practices regarding travel and purchasing. Almost everything OCLA does meets with the exemptions currently being allowed for the executive because generally everything OCLA does is programmatically focused, constitutionally mandated, or statutorily created with very specific guidelines.

9. OCLA Client Voice and Community Impact Coordinator (Bailey Zydek, Children’s Representation Program Director)

Bailey Zydek introduced Nick Guzmán, OCLA’s very first Client Voice and Community Impact Coordinator. This position is designed to elevate and amplify the voices of the very people the program is intended to serve.

With a passion for meaningful change, Nick is dedicated to creating frameworks that elevate the voices of young people with lived experience, ensuring their insights drive the work toward race equity and justice at OCLA. Having spent time in foster care at age 10, Nicolas brings a deep empathy and understanding of the challenges within these systems, alongside a commitment to advocate for youth and address the biases and inequities they often face.

Beginning his career in the service industry, where he quickly moved into management, Nick learned the value of servant leadership and building environments where everyone can thrive. Driven by a strong personal mission, he transitioned into the non-profit sector. Working for a youth advocacy organization, he led statewide outreach, built strategic partnerships, and, most importantly, worked directly with young people who had experienced foster care and/or homelessness. He’s grateful for the chance to connect and uplift those with lived experience and looks forward to making a lasting impact alongside his new team at OCLA.

10. Recap of 2024 Families Stronger Together Conference (Jeff Adams, OCLA Training and Operations Manager)

The 2024 Families Stronger Together Conference was a great success this year. It was a two-day conference with approximately 250 attendees. OCLA was able to secure speakers that brought high-quality content.

11. Public Comment/New Business

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

TAB 3

CIVIL LEGAL AID OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure that all people in Washington share in the fundamental right to civil justice, the Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee, consistent with its statutory authority, shall oversee and support the Office of Civil Legal Aid and shall periodically make recommendations to the Supreme Court, the Access to Justice Board and the Legislature as to the most efficient and effective use of state-appropriated civil legal aid funds on behalf of low-income people.

TAB 4

CIVIL LEGAL AID OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ROSTER (March 2025)

Position 1 (BJA 1):

Name: Hon. Janet Chung
Address: Washington State Court of Appeals, Div 1
600 University Street
Seattle, WA 98101-1176
Phone: 206-464-7750
E-mail: Janet.Chung@courts.wa.gov
Appointing Entity: Board for Judicial Administration
Term Expires: June 30, 2027; eligible for reappointment

Position 2 (BJA 2):

Name: Hon. Faye Chess
Address: Seattle Municipal Court
600 5th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206-684-5600
E-mail: faye.chess@seattle.gov
Appointing Entity: Board for Judicial Administration
Term Expires: June 30, 2025; not eligible for reappointment

Position 3 (Supreme Court 1):

Name: Megan Johnston
Address: P.O. Box 6188
Olympia, WA 98507-6188
Phone: (360) 628-9560
E-mail: mjohnston@resolutionwa.org
Appointing Entity: Supreme Court (on recommendation of the Access to Justice Board)
Term Expires: June 30, 2026; eligible for reappointment

Position 4 (Supreme Court 2):

Name: Natasha Damien
Address:

Phone:
E-mail: ms.damien.johns@gmail.com
Appointing Entity: Supreme Court (on recommendation of the Access to Justice Board)
Term Expires: June 30, 2025; eligible for reappointment

Position 5 (Supreme Court 3 – Client Eligible):

Name: Angela Cruze Boldt
Address:

Phone:
E-mail: cruzeangela@yahoo.com
Appointing Entity: Supreme Court (on recommendation of the Access to Justice Board)
Term Expires: June 30, 2026; eligible for reappointment

Position 6 (Senate Republican Caucus):

Name: Senator Drew MacEwen
Address: 115 Legislative Modular Building
PO Box 40435
Olympia, WA 98504
Phone: (360) 786-7668
E-mail: Drew.MacEwen@leg.wa.gov
Appointing Entity: Senate Republican Caucus
Term Expires: June 30, 2026; eligible for reappointment

Position 7 (Senate Democratic Caucus):

Name: Senator Yasmin Trudeau
Address: PO Box 40427
Olympia, WA 98504-0427
Phone: 360-786-7652
E-mail: yasmin.trudeau@leg.wa.gov
Appointing Entity: Senate Democratic Caucus
Term Expires: June 30, 2027; eligible for reappointment

Position 8 (House Republican Caucus):

Name:
Address:
Phone:
E-mail:
Appointing Entity: House Republican Caucus
Term Expires: June 30, 2025

Position 9 (House Democratic Caucus):

Name: Representative My-Linh Thai
Address: 424 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
Phone: 206-333-4107
E-mail: My-linh.thai@leg.wa.gov
Appointing Entity: House Democratic Caucus
Term Expires: June 30, 2025; eligible for reappointment

Position 10 (Office of the Governor):

Name: Alejandro (Ale') Sanchez
Address: WA St. Department of Licensing
1125 Washington Street SE - HLB, FL 4 - MS: 48002
Olympia, WA 98501
Phone: 360-972-6356
E-mail: alsanchez@dol.wa.gov
Appointing Entity: Department of Licensing
Term Expires: June 30, 2027; not eligible for reappointment

Position 11 (Washington State Bar Association):

Name: Molly Matter
Address: PO Box 13203
Burton, WA 98103
Phone: 206-280-8724
E-mail: amendmentxv@gmail.com
Appointing Entity: Washington State Bar Association
Term Expires: June 30, 2027; eligible for reappointment

TAB 5



PO Box 41183
Olympia, WA 98504-1183
360-485-1544

Sara Robbins
Director
sara.robbsins@ocla.wa.gov

To: OCLA Oversight Committee

From: Sara Robbins

Re: Director's Report

Date: March 6, 2025

OCLA Staffing

In February we added our 19th staff member to OCLA as Souriya Kongmanivong joined our Children's Representation Program as an Administrative and Contract Support Specialist. Souriya is a skilled professional with a diverse background in data analysis, administrative support, customer service, and bookkeeping. She's always enjoyed working with numbers and data, and she brings a detailed approach to all her work.

Souriya was born in Vientiane, Laos, and came as a refugee immigrant to the U.S. in 1981. Fluent in speaking both Lao and Thai, she takes great pride in her cultural heritage and is passionate about exploring and learning from other cultures. When not working or volunteering, Souriya loves spending time with her family - husband, two kids, and their beloved fur baby - and exploring the world through international travel.

Hope Hough, Administrative and Contract Support Lead, is retiring on April 1, 2025. Hope is currently the longest-serving employee at OCLA. She began working at OCLA on March 1, 2017, and Hope was the fourth OCLA employee. While OCLA has seen many changes over the past eight years, Hope has remained committed to OCLA's mission and to supporting OCLA's contractors and staff. We wish her the best in her retirement. We are reviewing the duties of this position, and we will repost for this job after the legislative session ends.

Oversight Committee Membership

Representative Greg Cheney left office on January 13, 2025. A request has been made to the House Republican Caucus to appoint a new member. I have not yet heard back on the appointment. The term for this position ends on June 30, 2025 and the new member will be eligible for reappointment.

OCLA in the News

I have spoken with some of you about the record high number of evictions in the state in 2024. We have seen a consistent increase in evictions since the right to counsel program was established in 2021, with 2024 being the highest number of eviction filings ever in Washington state. In January 2025, the most recent month we have data for, we saw the highest number of eviction filings ever in one month. This article outlines what we are seeing and how OCLA is responding and trying to keep up. [Evictions around Washington soar to record high levels | The Seattle Times](#)

Budget

We do not yet have much information about our ongoing budget. We are not anticipating any budget cuts for Fiscal Year 2025. We have made some reductions to our Decision Packages. I have included a revised chart outlining the reductions that we have made. I do not anticipate having any additional information on the budget until the legislative budgets are released around the end of March. Stefanie Powell, Director of Operations will share any additional information at the meeting.

Legislative Activities

Eviction Defense

In December 2024, before the legislative session started, the [Senate Housing Committee](#) organized a work session highlighting the housing and eviction crises that our state is facing. Philippe Knab, Program Director, was asked to present on OCLA's Eviction Defense Program and how this program is working to represent all low-income tenants in evictions proceedings, keeping people housed and working to prevent homelessness.

Long-Term Care Discharge

In January 2025, at the start of the legislative session, the [Senate Housing Committee](#) organized a work session highlighting many of the issues facing seniors in Washington to access and maintain secure housing. OCLA was asked to present on our Long-Term Care Decision Package along with our partner DSHS-Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA). Beth Leonard, Program Counsel at OCLA, presented regarding unlawful discharge issues facing residents of Long-Term Care and provided an overview of how our proposed Appointed Counsel Program will ensure that low-income residents of Long-Term Care facilities are discharged in a safe and orderly manner.

Victims of Crime

Funding relating to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is one of the most significant resources for victim service providers in our state. OCLA receives pass-through funding from the Washington Department of Commerce to support legal services for victims of crime. Historically, the primary funding source for the VOCA program was federal VOCA funds, but as federal funds decreased, the Washington State Legislature provided supplemental funds for the past four years. This has stabilized the funding for the VOCA program in one- and two-year increments. However, our providers are seeing an increased demand for services and increased complexity of

what is needed by victims and survivors. Commerce proposed [Senate Bill 5362](#) as a solution to the decrease in federal funds and the increasing needs. Annalise Martucci, Program Director, worked closely with Commerce and many partners to support this bill through testifying at committee hearings and meeting with legislators. This bill did not pass out of Ways and Means before the fiscal cut-off. We will continue to work with our partners on a budget request.

Foreclosure

In 2011 OCLA was statutorily named as a recipient of funding under the Foreclosure Fairness Act (FFA), authorized under [RCW 61.21.163](#). Since that time, OCLA has contracted for related services with the Northwest Justice Project (NJP), which houses the specialized Foreclosure Prevention Unit composed of trained attorneys and paralegals dedicated to advising and representing homeowners facing foreclosure. This is the only within OCLA funded in part by a dedicated revenue stream.

Senator Tina Orwall was the original sponsor of the Foreclosure Fairness Act and has continued to convene a multidisciplinary stakeholder group each year to address necessary updates. With stakeholder support, she introduced [Senate Bill 5686](#) this session, which has successfully passed through both policy and fiscal committees in the Senate. The bill serves two primary functions:

1. Expanding eligibility for the Foreclosure Fairness Mediation Program to include HOA/COA foreclosures
2. Modifying the fee structure for the FFA account, including changes to revenue allocation

Historically, fees were assessed on Notices of Default, generating approximately \$1 million annually - far below what the FFA partnership requires for operations. Last session, the Department of Commerce requested and received a one-time proviso to supplement funding and ensure continued operations.

SB 5686 introduces a new revenue stream by adding a program fee at the origination of a residential mortgage (with some exceptions). As currently structured, this is projected to generate an additional \$7 million per year to support foreclosure prevention services, including housing counseling, the Homeownership Resource Line, the foreclosure mediation program, and foreclosure legal aid. Importantly, the bill also updates statutory funding allocations. Under the current framework, OCLA receives 6% of available funding; however, SB 5686 increases OCLA's share to 16.5%. This adjustment recognizes the critical role legal aid plays in assisting homeowners at risk of foreclosure, particularly those facing co-occurring legal challenges such as divorce, bankruptcy, or probate - issues that housing counselors and other services may not be equipped to fully address. OCLA will continue to support this bill as it progresses.

Immigration

Governor Ferguson signed [Executive Order 25-04](#) Protecting Immigrant Families and Responding to Family Separation. I am representing OCLA on this taskforce which held its first meeting in February. DCYF is leading this taskforce and it is meeting every two weeks.

Children's Representation Program (CRP)

[Senate Bill 5761](#), proposes to delay the implementation of the expanded right to counsel for children and youth in dependency and termination proceedings pursuant to RCW 13.34.212(3). As the law currently stands, OCLA was to continue to phase its expanded Children's Representation Program in 2026-2028. Under SB 5761, implementation of the program will not resume until January 1, 2030 with full statewide implementation in 2032. In speaking with the Senator Frame, the Senator who drafted this bill we understand that the delay in implementation is exclusively related to the projected budget deficit that the State is currently facing over the next two biennia and is being pursued as a cost-saving measure. As a result, the CRP has paused all of our implementation efforts in Spokane and Clark counties.

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

In February, OCLA received proposals to enter into contracts for the upcoming biennium (2026-2027) for services relating to Pre-Filing Eviction Defense Services (Pre-RTC) and the Domestic Violence programs.

Pre-Filing Eviction Defense Services Program

Subject to final bill passage and signature by the Governor, OCLA anticipates receiving \$5,551,400 in legislatively appropriated state funding for FY 2026 and 2027 to award to contractors to provide civil legal information, advice, and representation to tenants at risk of eviction and against whom an unlawful detainer action has not yet commenced.

Domestic Violence

Subject to final bill passage and signature by the Governor, OCLA anticipates receiving \$2,000,000 in legislatively appropriated state funding for FY 2026 and FY 2027. OCLA has allocated up to \$1.52 million per year (\$4.56 for the three years) for legal representation and other legal services for those experiencing domestic violence.

OCLA has allocated up to \$400,000 per year (\$1,200,000 for the three years) for culturally relevant, specialized legal assistance to Native American survivors of domestic violence in rural Washington State.

Upcoming OCLA Priorities

- The Civil Legal Needs Scoping Committee remains a priority in calendar year 2025, with the committee currently drafting a summary report of their work.
- I will continue to work closely with Stefanie Powell, Director of Operations, the legislature, and the judicial branch on the 2025-2027 biennial budget.
- Continuing through April, I expect much of my time will be focused on the legislative session including OCLA's decision packages and the needs of the agency.



2025 Supplemental Budget Request

2025 OCLA Supplemental Decision Package	Maintenance or Policy Level	Estimated FY25 Request	Current Budget
<p>Supplemental Funding for Legally Free Children’s Representation Program Previously projected reductions for professional service contracts for fiscal year 2025 for the “legally free” Children’s Representation Program (CRP) have not been realized. However, the funding is essential to provide statutorily mandated representation. In addition, OCLA previously entered into contracts with attorneys to provide services for fiscal year 2025, and the contracts must be honored.</p> <p>This requests supplemental funding for FY 2025 to support contracts (contracted attorneys), goods and services, and travel.</p>	Maintenance	\$850,000	\$1,404.194

2026-27 Biennial Budget Requests

2026-2027 OCLA Decision Package	Maintenance or Policy Level	Updated Biennial Budget Request	Biennial Request
Continued Implementation of 2SHB 1219 through FY 2025	Maintenance	\$1,800,000	\$13,078,000
Children’s Representation Program – Contractor (Vendor) Rate Adjustment	Maintenance	\$2,640,000	\$4,591,000
Law Student Recruitment Initiative	Policy	\$500,000	\$1,500,000
Legal Aid Capacity, Infrastructure Preservation, and CLEAR Hotline Staffing *We have removed the CLEAR staffing	Maintenance/Policy		



		\$5,273,000	\$10,202,000
Civil Legal Aid for Survivors of Domestic Violence – Contractor (Vendor) Rate Adjustment	Maintenance	\$258,000	\$525,000
Kinship Care Legal Aid Appropriation and Vendor Rate Adjustment	Maintenance/Policy	\$567,000	\$567,000
Pre-Filing Eviction Defense Program	Maintenance	\$393,000	\$393,000
Low-Income Tenant Appointed Counsel Program	Policy	\$8,874,000	\$8,874,000
Civil Legal Aid for Blake Impacted Individuals	Maintenance	\$4,710,000	\$5,496,000
Reentry Legal Assistance Program	Maintenance	\$0	\$51,000
Legal Counsel for Long-Term Care Discharge	DSHS Policy	\$2,927,000	\$5,854,000
*DSHS has determined that this program is eligible for Medicaid match at 50%, so we are reducing the request by 50%.			