

Parent Representation Defense Program



In the Spring of
2020
Legal Aid Services
of Oklahoma

Brought High Quality Legal
Representation . . .

To the parents of Tulsa County involved
in child welfare and deprived court cases

By starting the:

“Parent Representation Defense
Program”

What does High Quality Legal Representation look like?

The Best Attorneys:

- Spend *time outside of court* getting to know their client, to identify client's strengths
- Know their *work outside the courtroom* is as important as in-court advocacy
- Are a part of an **interdisciplinary team** that includes a social worker and parent mentor
- Know how to advise clients to *navigate* within the child welfare & court system
- Are well *trained* and well *versed* in the law
- Have *support* from colleagues, case strategy conversations, have access to brief banks, law banks, and other local, state and national resources
- *Family Justice Initiative: Attributes of High Quality Legal Representation*



Interdisciplinary Parent
Defense is an:

Attorney + Master's Level Social Worker +
Parent Mentor =

“The Parent Defense Team”

*All operating under the attorney's
confidentiality and privilege!*

How does the LASO Parent Defense Team defend Parents:

work together to defend the parent client by:

Gather information – the social worker and parent mentor gather facts via out-of-court advocacy, while also supporting the parent client emotionally and mentally.

Communicate – the social worker and parent mentor communicate with the attorney to ensure the attorney is well informed of case related issues prior to court.

Advocate – the attorney zealously advocates in court for the parent client, the social worker and parent mentor strongly advocates for the parent client in DHS meetings, Court staffings, and Service provider meetings.

Share - Personal experience – the parent mentor brings their own lived experience to the parent client's situation which develops a *trusting relationship* with the parent client and the Parent Defense Team.

Benefits of Interdisciplinary Parents Defense For Parents:

- Protects parents' and children's legal rights
- Increases parties' participation in and out of court
- Improves all parties' perceptions of fairness
- Reduces delays in achieving permanency and helps parents and children reach better, long-term outcomes
- Promotes tailored case plans and services
- Improves frequency and timeliness of parent-child and sibling family time
- Informs better judicial decision making
- Saves the State money by reducing time children spend in foster care

Benefits of Interdisciplinary Defense for OKDHS, the Court System, and the State:

Benefits to the Child Welfare Agency: Interdisciplinary Parent Defense

- increases OKDHS accountability to parents, children and the Court
- decreases time children spend in foster care, away from their parents
- advocates for more meaningful treatment plans for parents and children resulting in successful case management

Benefits to the Courts:

- Advances a well functioning legal proceeding
- Provides parents and children with protections
- Promotes the fair administration of justice

Benefits to State:

- Stronger families and communities
- Significant cost savings to the State

How does LASO's Parent Representation Defense Program Benefit Parent Attorneys?

- Attorneys are supported by LASO PRDP Staff – Program Director, Managing Attorney, MSW Supervisor, Parent Mentor Coordinator, & Data Manager.
- Managing Attorney supports parent attorneys by:
 - Recruiting, hiring, retaining and training highly qualified parent attorneys
 - Advocating for reasonable caseloads and competitive compensation
 - Provides consultations, case strategy, trial strategy and appellate strategy
 - Provides attorneys with high quality educational and training opportunities including:
 - Local Round tables
 - State, Regional and National Conferences, i.e. ABA Parent Attorney Conference
 - **Website** with Practice Resources i.e., Brief, Motion, State and Federal law and State case law banks
 - Secondary Resources – Law Review Articles, Parent Defense Studies, other State's case law, Webinars, ABA, FJI, and Children's Bureau articles and memorandums
 - ABA Children and the Law Parent Attorney List-serve, CW Oklahoma List-serve
 - Case Management software to track cases, clients, data and outcomes
 - Language Line/LASO Ancillary Services, i.e. Housing, Benefits
- Program Director and Managing Attorney interact with community stakeholders to improve CW system



LOGIN



THE PARENT REPRESENTATION DEFENSE PROGRAM OF LEGAL AID SERVICES OF OKLAHOMA

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We empower parents and families involved in the child welfare system through high quality legal representation.

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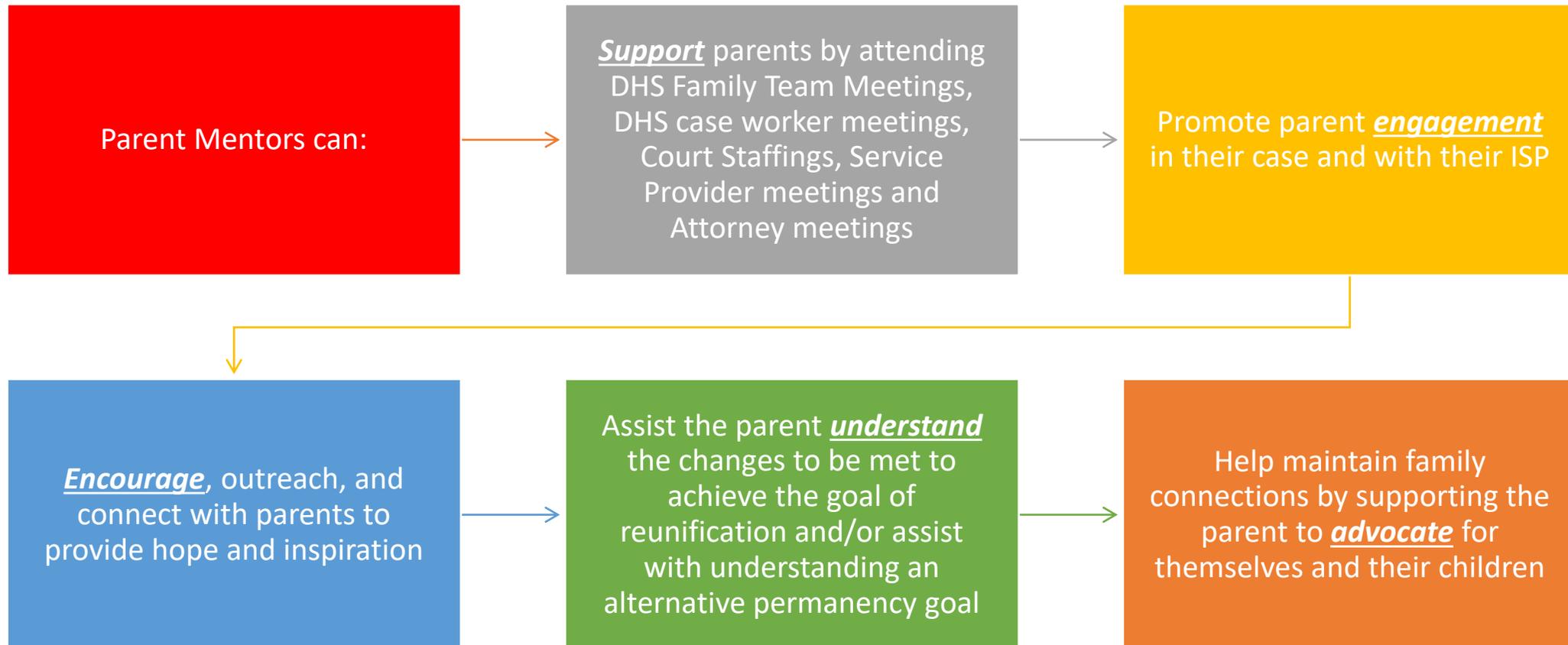


PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

Benefits for Parent Attorneys – Working with Master’s Level Social Workers on your Team:

Social Worker	Assess	Educate	Support	Resources	Coach	Engage
Master’s Level Social Worker’s on the Parent Defense Team can:	Assess needs and goals, psychosocial status, current client functioning, intellectual capacity, parenting skills/limitations and need for further evaluations	Educate clients on who the participants are in a case, how the court and system process works, communicate the client’s responsibilities and expectations, DHS responsibilities and educate on Treatment needs	Support the client by attending family team meetings, accompany to important appointments, crisis intervention, identify obstacles and remove barriers	Research and share resources, keep client up to date on the court process, assist client with effective communication with their Attorney, DHS, and can guide parent mentors in their role with the client	Coach parents to use their voice effectively, advocate for frequent and increased visitation, assist with return home safety planning, advocate for parent client participation in voicing child’s needs and child’s services	Increase parent’s engagement in their case, explore family supports and kinship placements, identify ways to move the case forward, and recommend alternative treatment

Benefits for Parent Attorneys – Working with Parent Mentors on your Team:



Why change Oklahoma's current model of Parent Defense from the solo practitioner model - attorneys contracting with the District Courts to represent parents?



SCIENCE



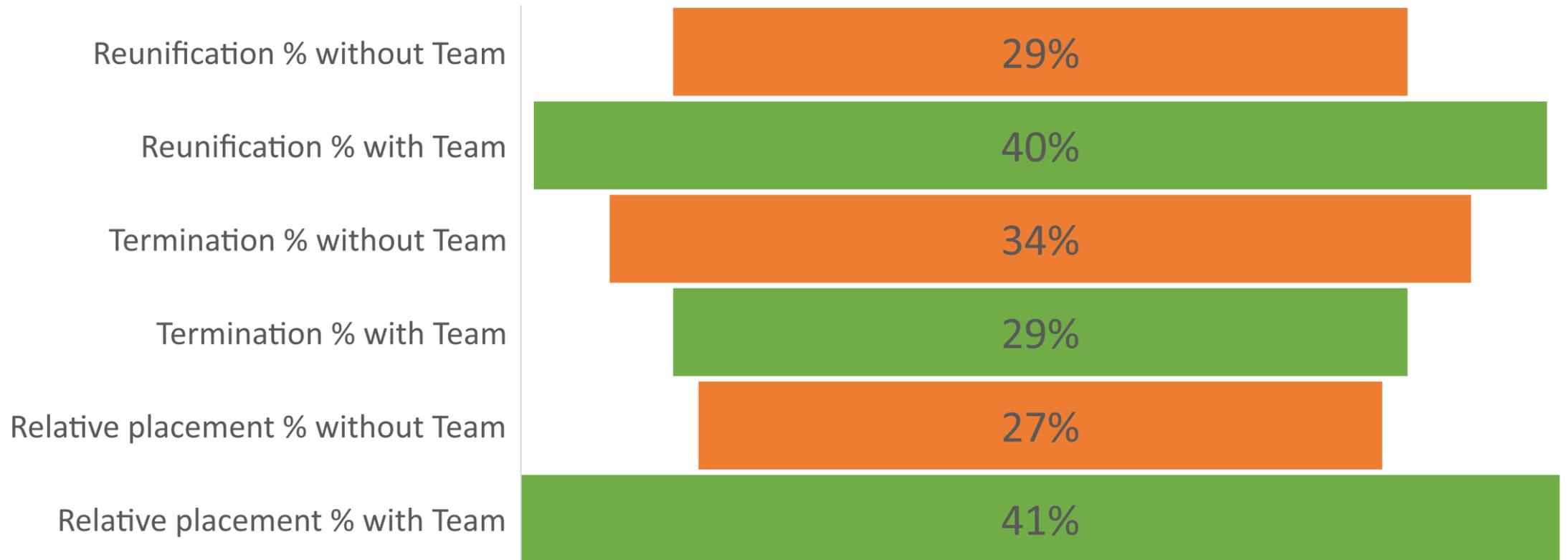
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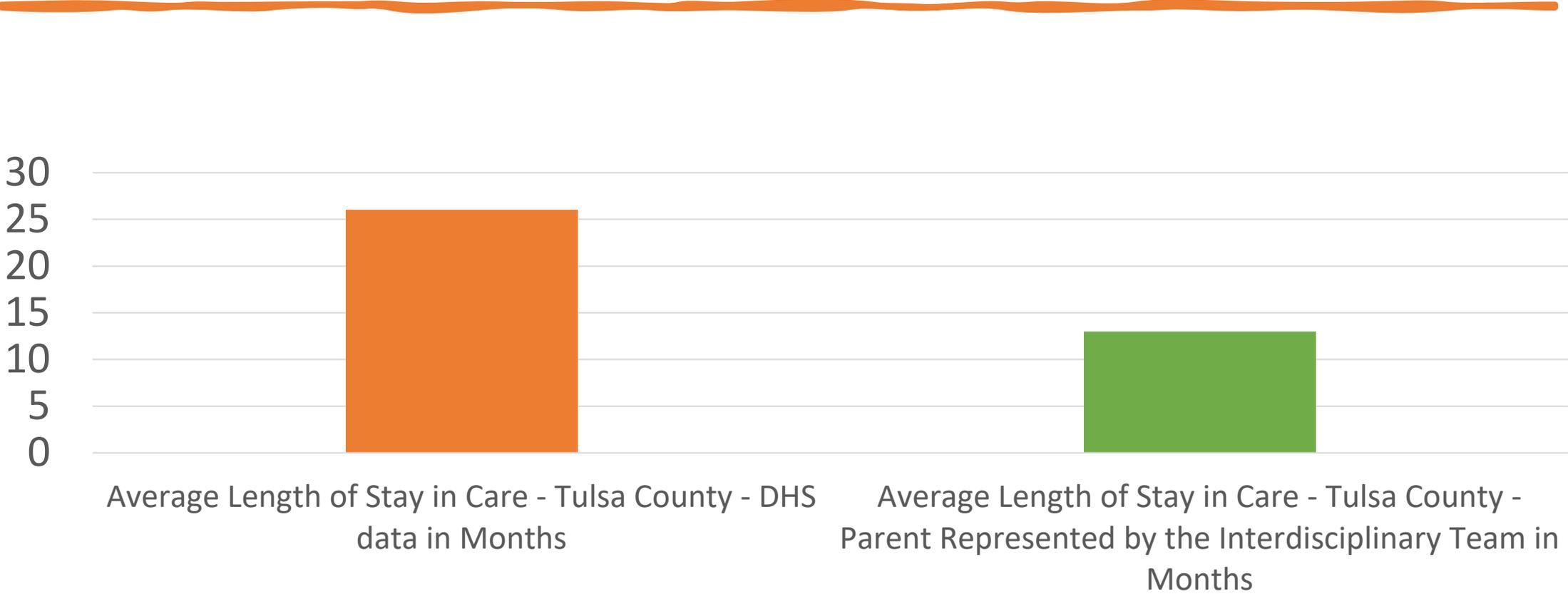
OUTCOMES



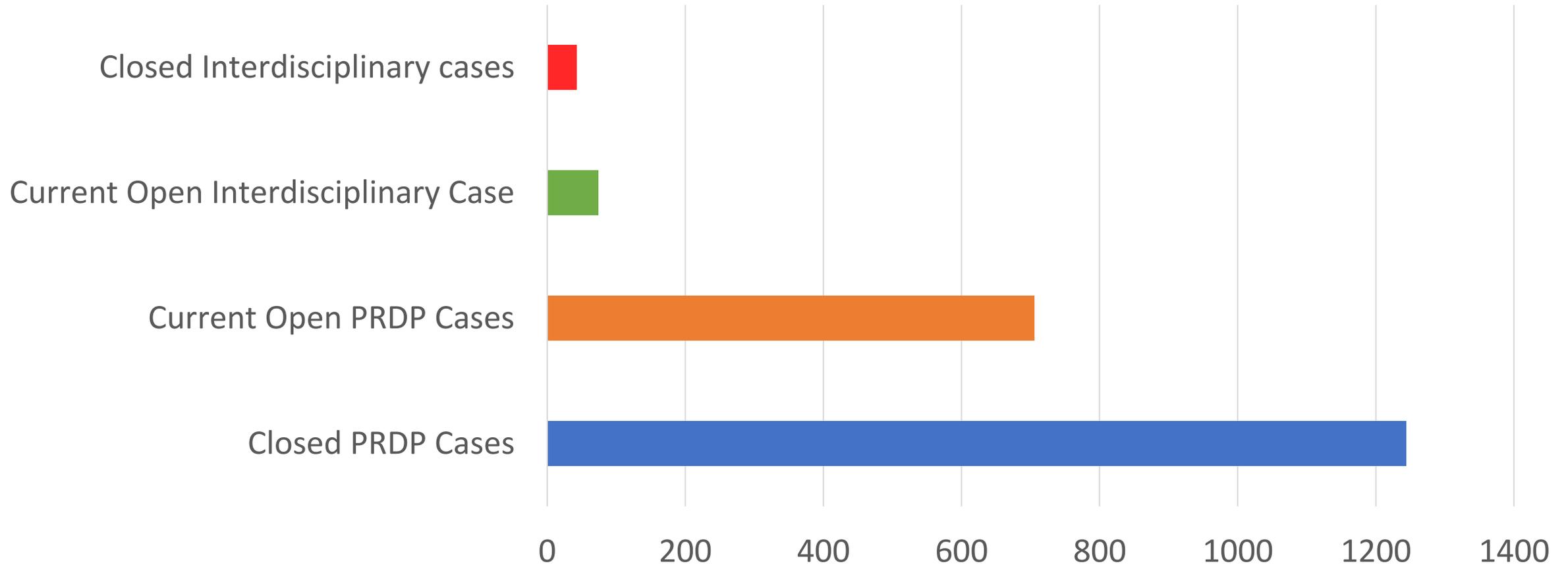
Outcomes – Interdisciplinary Team Parent Defense



Average Length of Stay in Foster Care



of cases served by LASO's Parent Rep Defense Program



LASO's PRDP
Parent
Attorneys have
improved their
practice by:

- Filing motions requesting relief for parent clients;
- Appealing adverse decisions for parent clients = 27 appeals in 16 months;
- Obtaining pre-petition case dismissals = 149 cases/188 children in 28 months;
- Increased knowledge of federal and state child welfare laws;
- LASO's PRDP support allows parent attorneys to zealously defend parent clients (without fear of retribution);
- LASO's PRDP support promotes robust in-court and out-of-court advocacy;
- LASO's PRDP support has increased parent attorney's knowledge of community resources; understanding of systems, negotiating out-of-the-box, **client centered** solutions, and knowledge of trauma informed practices;
- LASO's PRDP support has built a solid foundation leading to close professional relationships between parent attorneys, leading to vigorous legal strategy consultations and conversations.

Qualitative Reports:

- **LASO's Parent Defense Team's effect on our parent clients and community are best reflected in the comments our Interdisciplinary team's have received:**
 - "I wish I had you at the beginning of this case; it would have turned out totally different." Parent Attorney to Parent Mentor
 - "Thank you! This is wonderfully helpful, and I appreciate your efforts to refocus [my client]." Parent Attorney to Social Worker and Parent Mentor
 - "I think it's really nice that the client gets someone like you to walk beside them through this." DHS Permanency Worker to Parent Mentor
 - "I am thankful I have someone to help keep my client focused." DHS Permanency Worker to Parent Mentor
 - "Thank you so much! I honestly would be lost without you." Parent Client to Parent Mentor
 - "I'm so happy to finally have someone who can listen and understand." Parent Client to Parent Mentor
 - "You make me feel motivated." Parent Client to Parent Mentor



LASO's Tulsa PRDP Staff Contact Information:

Gwendolyn.Clegg@laok.org

Program Director

Laura.Garrison@laok.org

Parent Mentor Coordinator

Priscilla.Minor-Thoms@laok.org

Social Worker Supervisor

Claire.Rogers@laok.org

Managing Attorney

Donald.Cherry@laok.org

Data Manager