

The Office of Dispute Resolution

The Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) was created by the Colorado Dispute Resolution Act in 1983. The ODR's mission is to establish or make available dispute resolution programs and related services throughout the state, as designated by the Chief Justice of Colorado's Supreme Court. The courts were encouraged to expand use of the Dispute Resolution Act by HJR 97-1020.

ODR assists the courts in designing, implementing, and administering dispute resolution programs, including multi-door courthouse programs which provide case screening to assist in matching cases to an appropriate dispute resolution process. ODR also provides dispute resolution services, including mediation and other services; helps establish Colorado's dispute resolution policies; provides information to the public regarding dispute resolution and Colorado's dispute resolution programs; collaborates with other individuals and organizations, including governmental units, such as bar associations, community mediation centers, schools, private and public dispute resolution programs, and others to increase access to dispute resolution services; consults with state and local governments regarding the design, implementation, and administration of dispute resolution programs; and provides dispute resolution education and training.

ODR first began mediating cases in FY 1985, with 54 domestic relations cases. In FY 2007, an estimated 6,326 domestic relations, civil, criminal, juvenile, dependency and neglect, truancy, county court, and probate cases were filed with ODR from 19 of the state's 22 judicial districts. Of these, 4,910 were mediated or provided other ADR services; the remaining cases were withdrawn by the parties for a variety of reasons, including settlement prior to mediation. Mediation services constituted approximately 96 percent of ODR's services in FY2007.

Other dispute resolution services provided included parenting coordination, parenting facilitation, family group conferences, settlement conferences, senior judge ADR Settlement Conferences, senior judge ADR screening conferences, and arbitration.

From the early 1990s through FY05, ODR was cash-funded by the fees paid for ADR services. Beginning in FY06, ODR instead receives a General Fund appropriation for program/administrative costs, and the parties pay the mediators directly for their services. ODR continues to provide free mediation services for indigent parties and subsidized mediation services for low-income parties in cases involving parenting issues, and has expanded its free ADR services for other indigent parties and for dependency and neglect cases, based on its General Fund appropriation and its continuing receipt of the federal Access and Visitation Program grant funds. Beginning in FY06, ODR also began offering mini-grants for community conflict resolution and restorative justice services. General information regarding the Office of Dispute Resolution is available at www.ColoradoODR.org.