



Administrative Memorandum

Nebraska Supreme Court
Nebraska State Capitol
P.O. Box 98910, Lincoln, NE 68509
P: 402.471.3730 F: 402.471.2197

www.supremecourt.ne.gov

Mediation's 20th Anniversary Celebration Starts with March Proclamation Signing



Mediation Center directors and justices include (L-R back): Casey Karges, Jane Martin-Hoffman, Justice Michael McCormack, Chief Justice Mike Heavican, Judy Pingel, Cindy Tierney, (front) Debora Brownyard.



Attending proclamation signing are: Dispute Resolution Advisory Council Chairman Carl Eskridge, ODR Director Debora Brownyard, Justice Michael McCormack, Chief Justice Mike Heavican and Dispute Resolution Advisory Council Vice Chairman Michael Pirtle.

Chief Justice Mike Heavican accepted a proclamation from Governor Dave Heineman declaring March as Mediation Month in Nebraska during a ceremony in the State Capitol on March 9, 2011. The document noted that 2011 marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) of the State of Nebraska, created by statute in 1991 as part of the Administrative Office of the Nebraska Supreme Court.

The ceremony was also attended by Justice Michael McCormack, liaison to the Office of Dispute Resolution; Carl Eskridge, Dispute Resolution Advisory Council Chairman; Michael Pirtle, Dispute Resolution Advisory Council Vice Chairman; Debora Brownyard, Esq., Nebraska Supreme Court Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) Director; mediation professionals and supporters.

During her program remarks, Brownyard recognized the 20 years of conflict resolution services provided by the Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution, ODR approved mediation centers, their affiliate mediators, and other public and private mediators throughout the state. "With mediation services, Nebraska's mediation centers strive to help people achieve and maintain self determination in their lives, preserve relationships between people, and eliminate the strain of avoidable litigation and pressure on the courts. We believe that, in civil society, both justice and in the end, it is relationships that matter," said Brownyard.

Since 1992, the ODR-approved mediation centers have handled over 27,915 mediation cases. During the 2009-2010 program year, the centers' case volume was 2,789 cases, a 17% increase over the prior year's case volume. Referrals from courts accounted for over 57%. Court referrals to mediation centers have leaped by 134% over the past three years because of parenting mediations, small claims mediations, and facilitation of child welfare cases. Of the 1,604 cases mediated last year, 85% were resolved successfully.

Mediation is a process that brings disputing parties together to resolve their conflicts and to produce solutions that are acceptable and beneficial to everyone involved. It is a structured but informal process conducted by one or more trained neutral individuals who assist the parties gain agreement.

A typical mediation session lasts from one to three hours and, if more complex, can span two to four sessions. Mediation is especially effective in resolving disputes in areas such as labor/management, neighborhood conflicts, divorce, consumer/merchant, landlord/tenant, and small claims cases. Mediation offers participants a less expensive, less combative, and less time-consuming alternative to litigation.

In addition to providing direct mediation services to citizens, these non-profit organizations and affiliated mediators serve Nebraskans by providing numerous public and community seminars on communication, conflict management, and violence prevention, as well as conducting strategic planning and other problem-solving processes.

The six ODR-approved non-profit regional community mediation centers provide "best practice" approaches to parenting mediation, child welfare mediation, facilitation of pre-hearing and family group conferences for children and families, as well as access to other dispute resolution services to address disputes in court and in the community:

Central Mediation Center, Kearney
The Mediation Center, Lincoln
Nebraska Justice Center, Fremont

Concord Center, Omaha
Mediation West, Scottsbluff
The Resolution Center, Beatrice

An 11-member ODR Advisory Council, comprised of Nebraska Supreme Court-appointed representatives from the District Court Judges Association, the County Court Judges Association, the Nebraska State Bar Association, social workers, mental health professionals, educators and others, together with ODR and the mediation centers, constitutes Nebraska's coordinated system for providing easily accessible and competent dispute resolution services for all Nebraskans.



For more information, contact the Office of Dispute Resolution:
Debora Brownyard, Director

TEL: (402) 471-2766

Email: debora.brownyard@nebraska.gov

Or the mediation center in your area:

<http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/mediation/index.shtml?sub7>