



# PROGRAM & PROJECT QUICK LOOK

## OFFICE OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

### VICTIM YOUTH CONFERENCE

The mission of the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) is to enhance and advance the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), including mediation and restorative justice, throughout Nebraska by partnering with ODR- approved community mediation centers and others involved with ADR.

#### ORIGIN & AUTHORIZATION

- Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 25-2901 to 25-2921 (Dispute Resolution Act)
- Neb. Rev. Stat §§ 43-246; 43-247.03; 43-260.06; 43-274; 43-275 to 43-276; 43-2,108.01 to 43-2,108.04; 43-286(3), (Juvenile Code. Authorize restorative justice in juvenile cases as prescribed)
- Neb. Rev. Stat §§ 79-209 to 79-258 (Student Discipline Act. Authorize referrals to restorative justice practices or services for compulsory attendance collaborative plans)

#### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A victim youth conference (VYC) is a restorative justice process that allows for a dialogue between youth, victim (or victim surrogate), family and other support persons who come together during a joint conference to discuss how an offense affected each of them. This evidence-based program allows involved parties to understand the full impact of the offense and make amends. The program minimizes youths' involvement in the juvenile justice system by providing alternative disciplinary responses to offenses. With funding provided in part from The Sherwood Foundation, VYC is available in all 12 judicial districts.

In 2019, LB 595 was passed to amend the 1991 Dispute Resolution Act and explicitly incorporate restorative justice into ODR's mission and purpose, and to sustain the successful restorative justice efforts conducted since 2015. With its passage, the Legislature finds that "employing restorative justice can provide an avenue for repair, healing, accountability, and community safety to address the harm experienced by victims as a result of an offense committed by youth or adult individuals," Neb. Rev. Stat. § 25-2902(4).

Three primary goals of the statewide VYC expansion initiative include:

- Increase the number of youth served by the VYC process as an alternative disciplinary response in schools, the courts, and probation.
- Train facilitators of diverse backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the youth served.
- Build a secure financial framework necessary to sustain VYC as a prevention and intervention strategy.

#### PRIORITIES

- Reduce recidivism through a restorative process that requires youth to take responsibility for their actions, understand the impact their actions had on victims and the community, and be an active participant in developing a reparations plan.
- Increase victim satisfaction and confidence in the justice system and acknowledge victim voices.
- Empirically evaluate program effectiveness in juvenile justice outcomes.
- Expand the use of restorative justice practices throughout all systems that encounter youth who cause harm.

#### RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ODR has expanded the reach of restorative programs offered statewide. A comprehensive evaluation report for the period of July 2018 – June 2019 is available and includes information on planning for sustainability, outcome evaluation, process evaluation, and recommendations.

# NEBRASKA JUDICIAL BRANCH PROGRAM & PROJECT QUICK LOOK

## RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CONTINUED

Populations Served Since the VYC Program Began					
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Totals Since Start of Program
	Pilot	Pilot Extension	Year 1 Enhancement Initiative	Year 2 Enhancement Initiative	
Referrals	93	154	216	271	<b>734</b>
Actual VYC Conferences	70	142	159	222	<b>593</b>
Victims Served	114	199	223	127	<b>663</b>
Reparations Agreements	41	112	159	212	<b>524</b>

- As of June 2019, more than 700 cases have been referred to the VYC program with nearly 600 victim youth conferences held, and more than 650 victims served through participation in VYCs.
- Since 2015, almost 90% (524) of the conferences resulted in a reparations agreement between the offending youth and the victim or victim surrogate.

## LOOKING FORWARD

ODR seeks to expand the types of restorative programs offered statewide through collaboration with the regional community mediation centers and other state agencies, and continue the upward trend of the number of youth, victims, and communities served by restorative justice. The ODR will be focusing on a public campaign to increase awareness and identify effective and timely dissemination of information to victims, affording them the opportunity to take advantage of restorative justice. The ODR office continues to work with judges, probation, diversion programs, and schools to integrate VYC systemically into juvenile orders, juvenile program protocols, and disciplinary responses to offenses in schools.

## CONTACTS

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## REFERENCES

Nebraska Judicial Branch Office of Dispute Resolution: <https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/programs-services/mediation-restorative-justice/restorative-justice>

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