



# Juvenile Victim Offender Conferencing Pilot Program: A Year in Review

**Evaluation of the Pilot First Year  
for the  
Office of Dispute Resolution  
Administrative Office of the Courts, Nebraska Judicial Branch  
November 2016  
Prepared by Jennifer Blevins**



**Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking**

An International Resource Center in Support of Restorative Justice Dialogue, Research, and Training

University of Minnesota College of Education & Human Development School of Social Work

**Table of Contents**

- Executive Summary .....2
- Overview - Juvenile VOC Pilot Background and Goals.....4
  - Key Stakeholders .....5
- Evaluation Framework.....7
- Juvenile VOC Pilot Results.....8
  - Flow Chart of Total Cases .....11
  - Case Status by Mediation Center and Juvenile Demographics .....12
  - What we know about Victim Participants .....13
- Juvenile VOC Pilot Outcome Measures .....13
  - VOC Training Attendees and Outcomes .....14
  - Case Referral Process.....16
  - Case Referral Sources .....17
  - VOC Participant Satisfaction and Benefits.....18
  - Length of Open VOC Cases .....21
  - Measuring Recidivism .....22
- Process Evaluation .....23
  - Stories of Transformation.....23
  - What’s Worked Well.....24
  - Areas to be Strengthened and Lessons Learned .....26
- Program Sustainability Assessment .....27
- Recommendations For Juvenile VOC Phase II .....29
- Conclusion.....31
- Appendix A: Case Stories of Impact.....33
- Appendix B: Sustainability Assessment Summary .....35

## Executive Summary

**Background:** The Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) within the Administrative Office of the Courts, Nebraska Judicial Branch, initiated the Juvenile Victim Offender Conferencing (VOC) Pilot to address the negative impact of the deep immersion of youth into the juvenile justice system. Funding was graciously provided by the Sherwood Foundation.

The pilot has been implemented March 2015 through July 2016 in the 4th Judicial District's Douglas County Juvenile Court in partnership with Concord Mediation Center, the 3rd Judicial District's Lancaster County Juvenile Court in partnership with The Mediation Center, and the 12th Judicial District's juvenile courts in partnership with Mediation West.

**Purpose of Evaluation:** The Juvenile VOC Pilot Program was designed with a set of measurable goals, outputs and outcomes to improve conditions for juvenile offenders and victims, and to support the expanded use of VOC as an evidence-based practice for prevention and intervention in Nebraska juvenile court cases. If successful,

**Methodology:** Qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, which are aligned with output and outcome measures, have been developed to document the degree to which intended results were achieved.

The Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking's evaluation team also led program staff through an exploratory set of process evaluation questions to determine what is working well to achieve the desired outputs and outcomes, and what may need to be changed to optimize program success. Last, a sustainability assessment tool was used with program staff to further identify areas of strength and areas needing capacity development moving forward.

**Findings:** Evaluators have provided evaluation data in the full report with recommendations for expanding the pilot statewide.

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### *Juvenile Victim Offender Conferencing Pilot Program: The First Year in Review*

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Prepared by the  
Center for Restorative  
Justice & Peacemaking  
University of Minnesota  
August 2016

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★ **70** juveniles receiving VOC services through mediation centers.

★ **93%** of completed VOC's resulted in a reparations agreement for the juvenile to make amends.

★ **85%** of reparations agreements were successfully fulfilled by juveniles and 5% were in process.

★ **81%** of juveniles and **89%** of victims reported feeling the criminal justice system was more responsive to their needs with VOC.

★ A full **100%** of victims and **97%** of juveniles and their parents would recommend participating in VOC to others in similar situations.

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## Recommendations

### **For greater reach and impact:**

Expand the Juvenile VOC statewide as phase II of the pilot program. Build a foundational triad of multiple funding sources, multiple referral sources and multiple restorative justice models to best serve youth, their families, victims and communities.

### **For strategic planning:**

Engage key stakeholders in a strategic planning process to create a 5-year comprehensive blueprint for the use of restorative justice practices involving diversion and court involved youth at the local, district and statewide levels.

### **For funding stability:**

Advocate for VOC as an appropriation in the Judicial Branch State budget and identify other resources for VOC. In the first 3 years, greater investment may be needed from funders who are already engaged to allow adequate time to diversify the funding portfolio.

### **For stakeholder engagement, partnerships, and communication:**

Hire a Statewide Restorative Justice Coordinator to build the relationship network, gain political support, increase juvenile case referrals, and lead systems change efforts.

Adhere to best practices protocol to ensure cases are handled in a timely manner with optimum outcomes. Develop memorandums of understanding (MOU) with clear expectations between mediation centers and referral sources for program implementation.

### **For organizational capacity building:**

With a focus on sustainability, include advanced training with more case scenarios and a train-the-trainer model to build the training capacity and volunteer facilitator pool within the state. Incorporate training on outreach and marketing of restorative justice program models.

Reach out to ethnic minority communities to educate them about the juvenile VOC program, recruit VOC facilitators, and provide training options that encourage their participation.

Create a staff position for each mediation center to build at the ground level, ensure high program fidelity to the process and results, and continue to build capacity.

### **For program evaluation and adaptability:**

Continue to develop best practices for the tracking and reporting of juvenile recidivism with the State Courts and service providers.

Ensure that reporting tools are consistently applied across mediation centers, and data reported to ODR. Establish baseline and comparative data to accurately interpret VOC impact.

## Overview of Juvenile VOC Pilot and Goals

### Background

The Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) within the Administrative Office of the Courts, Nebraska Judicial Branch, initiated the Juvenile Victim Offender Conferencing (VOC) Pilot Program as a means to address the negative impact of the deep immersion of youth into the juvenile justice system. Research has shown that traditional criminal justice system responses to delinquent behavior not only is costly, but results in poor outcomes for youths and communities.

The Office of Dispute Resolution has worked for over two decades to reduce the exposure of children and youth to lengthy adversarial court trials by increasing the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) practices. This project pilots juvenile victim offender conferencing (also known as victim offender mediation), which is an ADR approach grounded in restorative justice principles. The pilot began in March 2015 and runs through July 2016. The pilot is being implemented in the 4th Judicial District's Douglas County Juvenile Court, the 3rd Judicial District's Lancaster County Juvenile Court and the 12th Judicial District's juvenile courts, primarily in Scotts Bluff and Cheyenne counties. VOC is a strong evidence-based practice, with decades of research substantiating its proven successes to reduce youth recidivism, increase reparation and restitution to victims, and to be cost-effective. If successful, the goal is to expand VOC statewide.

### Juvenile VOC Pilot Goals

The first goal of the juvenile VOC pilot program is to work with key stakeholders to create foundational policies, referral and practice protocols, and forms necessary to implement juvenile VOC cases in the target districts with high fidelity to evidence-based VOC best practices. These foundational policies, protocols and forms will be created so that they can be used statewide with ODR's expectation that this program will successfully achieve its desired outcomes.

The second goal of the juvenile VOC pilot program is to train a minimum of 24 facilitators<sup>1</sup> in the evidence-based practice of victim offender conferencing. Of those, a minimum of 6 facilitators will be of African-American, Latino, Native American, or Asian ethnicity. These facilitators will be actively conducting the VOC cases in the three pilot target regions in the state as well as ad hoc cases occurring in the other four regions of the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the terms "facilitator" and "mediator" are used interchangeably.

ODR's third goal of the VOC pilot originally was to provide victim offender conferencing services to 50 youth under probation case management and 50 or more victims in Douglas County, and 40 youth under probation case management and 40 or more victims in the 12th Judicial District by the completion of the pilot program. The outcome indicator for this goal is set at a total of 70 youth within the juvenile justice system participating in VOC services.

Early in the pilot development as ODR and stakeholders assessed the program's feasibility and potential impact, a few changes were made broadening the geographic scope and referral relationships. The language in the original pilot goal used the phrase "probation case management" since that was the target population as approved by the State Court Administrator. However, after meeting with Douglas County attorneys and Juvenile Assessment Center diversion directors, and learning their early intervention goals, they, along with ODR, Concord Mediation Center, the State Court Administrator and Sherwood Foundation approved enlarging the scope to youth involved in the juvenile justice system, from diversion through court filing, and through probation. At the same time, the VOC services provided by The Mediation Center in Lancaster County, including VOC offered in partnership with the county attorney's public school diversion program, were also added.

Although VOC has been proven effective, it has only been used on a small scale in Nebraska due in large part to a lack of program and administrative resources and funding, according to ODR. Increased utilization of this intervention is a change from the normal course of business in juvenile court. Stakeholder development, integration of restorative justice practices, education, and experience with VOC is necessary to establish it as standard practice in Nebraska. Given the importance of educating key stakeholders about the value and use of ODR, this is listed as a fourth goal for the purpose of the pilot program evaluation.

## Key Stakeholders

The Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) within the Administrative Office of the Courts, Nebraska Judicial Branch, is leading the juvenile VOC pilot program. The VOC program fits within goals (2) and (3) of the Nebraska Judicial Branch's six strategic goals. Those are: (1) Providing Access to Swift, Fair Justice; (2) Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults; (3) Addressing Community Safety; (4) Being Accountable to the Public; (5) Strengthening Communication with Citizens and Government; (6) Regulating the Legal profession.

Established under the 1991 Dispute Resolution Act, ODR has served over 80,000 people statewide with mediation and ADR programs. The leaders of ODR and Administrative Office of the Courts have a strong commitment to alternative dispute resolution that further the goals of

the judicial branch, and they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the implementation of high impact services.

ODR partners with Nebraska's nonprofit mediation centers and others to provide mediation and dispute resolution to Nebraska's courts and citizens. Mediation is available in all 93 counties of Nebraska. Nebraska's network of skilled mediators and well established mediation centers provides a solid foundation for juvenile VOC. The environment is ripe for expansion of alternative that support the well-being of Nebraska's residents. Specifically for the juvenile VOC pilot program, three mediation centers are primary partners.

Mediation West is the approved center of the Nebraska Supreme Court's Office of Dispute Resolution for Arthur, Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Hooker, Keith, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, and Sioux Counties. More information can be found on their website at [www.mediationwest.org/](http://www.mediationwest.org/).



Concord Mediation Center is the approved center of the Nebraska Supreme Court's Office of Dispute Resolution for Douglas and Sarpy Counties. More information can be found on their website at [www.concordmediationcenter.com/](http://www.concordmediationcenter.com/).

The Mediation Center is the approved center of the Nebraska Supreme Court's Office of Dispute Resolution for Lancaster County. More information can be found on their website at [www.themediationcenter.org/](http://www.themediationcenter.org/)



The Office of Dispute Resolution contracted program development and evaluation services with the Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking (CRJP) at the University of Minnesota, School of Social Work. CRJP's role was to provide policy and protocol development, case consultation and VOC training to the Nebraska's VOC facilitators. Education on VOC was also provided to key stakeholders, including judges, probation, attorneys, and youth workers. Last, CRJP conducted the evaluation of the pilot, including preparing this final evaluation report at the end of the VOC pilot period.

## Evaluation Framework

The Juvenile Victim Offender Conferencing Pilot Program was designed with a set of measurable goals, outputs and outcomes in mind to improve conditions for juvenile offenders<sup>2</sup> and victims, and to support the expanded use of VOC as an evidence-based practice for prevention and intervention in Nebraska juvenile court cases. Qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, which are aligned with output and outcome measures, have been developed to document the degree to which intended results were achieved.

CRJP has included a process evaluation to focus on the development and operations of the program, which is important for this pilot to determine which program components are working to achieve the desired outputs and outcomes, and what may need to be changed to optimize program success in the future. Outputs differ from outcomes in that outputs are the specific activities carried out as part of the strategy to achieve goals, whereas outcomes refer to the impact, or what is different as a result, of the activities.

The Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking's evaluation team led program staff through an exploratory set of questions to determine which aspects of the program operations are working to achieve the desired outputs and outcomes, and what may need to be changed to optimize program success in the future.

ODR and mediation center stakeholders, in coordination with CRJP, have documented pilot program activities, including contacts, discussions, agreements and implementation plans for purposes of the process evaluation, as well as for the purpose of creating a historical record so that after this pilot project ends, information is available to address implementation issues and inform program sustainability.

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<sup>2</sup> Feedback from key stakeholders has resulted in a change in the language used to reference juvenile offenders for the VOC pilot project. Hereinafter, this report will refer to the juvenile offender as "juvenile," or as "juvenile who caused harm" when more description is helpful.



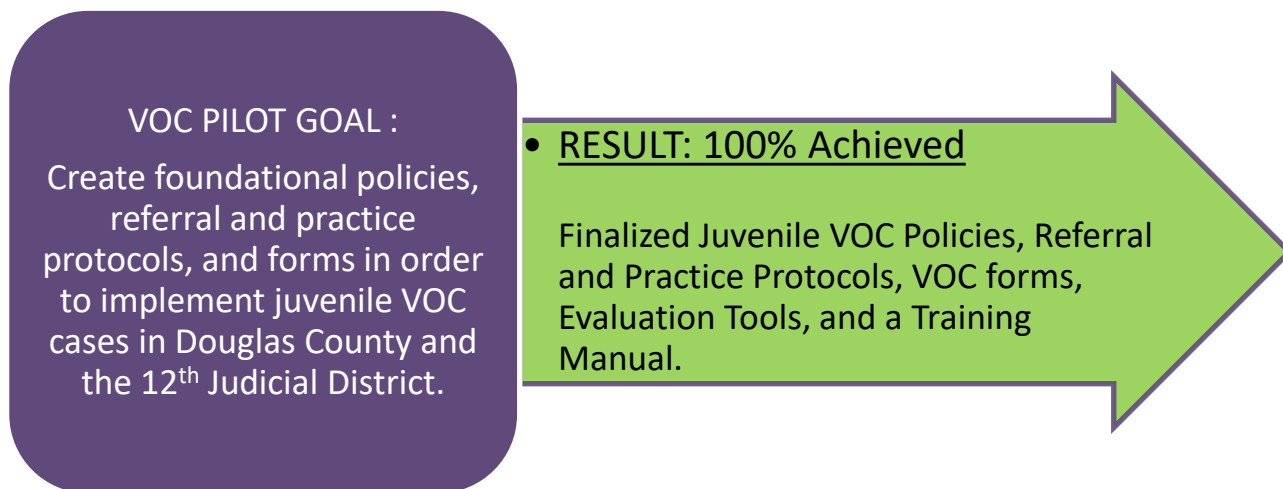
It is important to note that the implementation and sustainability of youth-focused restorative justice programs continues to be under-documented throughout the United States to inform implementation of quality sustainable programs moving forward. As juvenile VOC and other restorative justice approaches are customized and integrated to meet the specific needs and culture of the community in which they're implemented, finding the balance between program fidelity and adaptability is essential for program improvements to be made in Nebraska's juvenile justice system. With this in mind, a sustainability assessment tool has been used with program staff as part of the overall Juvenile VOC Pilot Program.

Outcome evaluation measures and data collection for the measurement process have been compiled from the pilot program logic model, outcome evaluation plan, and narrative pilot program description submitted to the Sherwood Foundation as part of the pilot project's proposal in August 2014.

For each section of this evaluation report, the intent of the CRJP evaluator is to share information that is easily accessible and efficient for key stakeholders to read. For more information or explanation, please contact Jennifer Blevins at the CRJP office, 612-624-4923.

## VOC Pilot Goals and Results

Juvenile VOC pilot achievements based on the set goals are reported for the period of March 2015 through July 2016.



Key stakeholders including the ODR Director and staff, Directors of nonprofit mediation centers statewide, and CRJP consultants participated in monthly conference call meetings to edit and approve final protocol and all VOC forms. As VOC protocols and tools were applied to

actual cases, continued editing of documents occurred to ensure the highest degree of fidelity in VOC implementation. CRJP consultants provided ongoing case coaching to the mediation centers as well.

**VOC PILOT GOAL:**  
Train a minimum of 24 facilitators in VOC. Of those, a minimum of 6 facilitators will be of African-American, Latino, Native American, or Asian ethnicity.

- **RESULT 1: 100% Achieved**  
Three training sessions were held with 71 unduplicated attendees.
- **RESULT 2: 83% Achieved**  
One Native American, two Latin Americans, and two African Americans received VOC training.

During the pilot, an unduplicated 71 people attended one or more VOC training sessions held by CRJP consultants in June 2015, October 2015, and March 2016. Of the 71, five were ODR staff, one was a probation administrator, and 65 were service providers in some capacity (mediators and facilitators, center staff, volunteers, attorneys, and advocates). More than double the number of facilitators were trained than that established as the original goal; an estimated 53 facilitators/mediators received training.

**VOC PILOT GOAL :**  
Educate state leaders and community stakeholders about VOC, its value in improving youth outcomes, and their role in effective implementation.

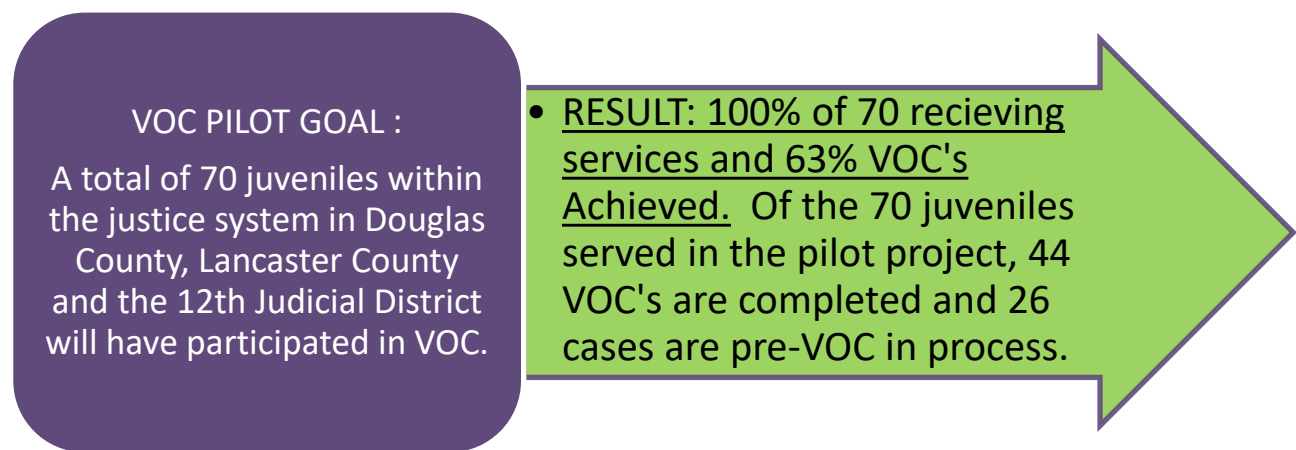
- **RESULT: 80% Achieved**  
Outreach and education of State leaders and key stakeholders has occurred statewide and is ongoing.

While a significant amount of outreach to stakeholders has occurred for the pilot, results are reported as 80% achieved, because more is needed to create and sustain changes in the way juvenile cases are handled by the judicial system. Change takes time.

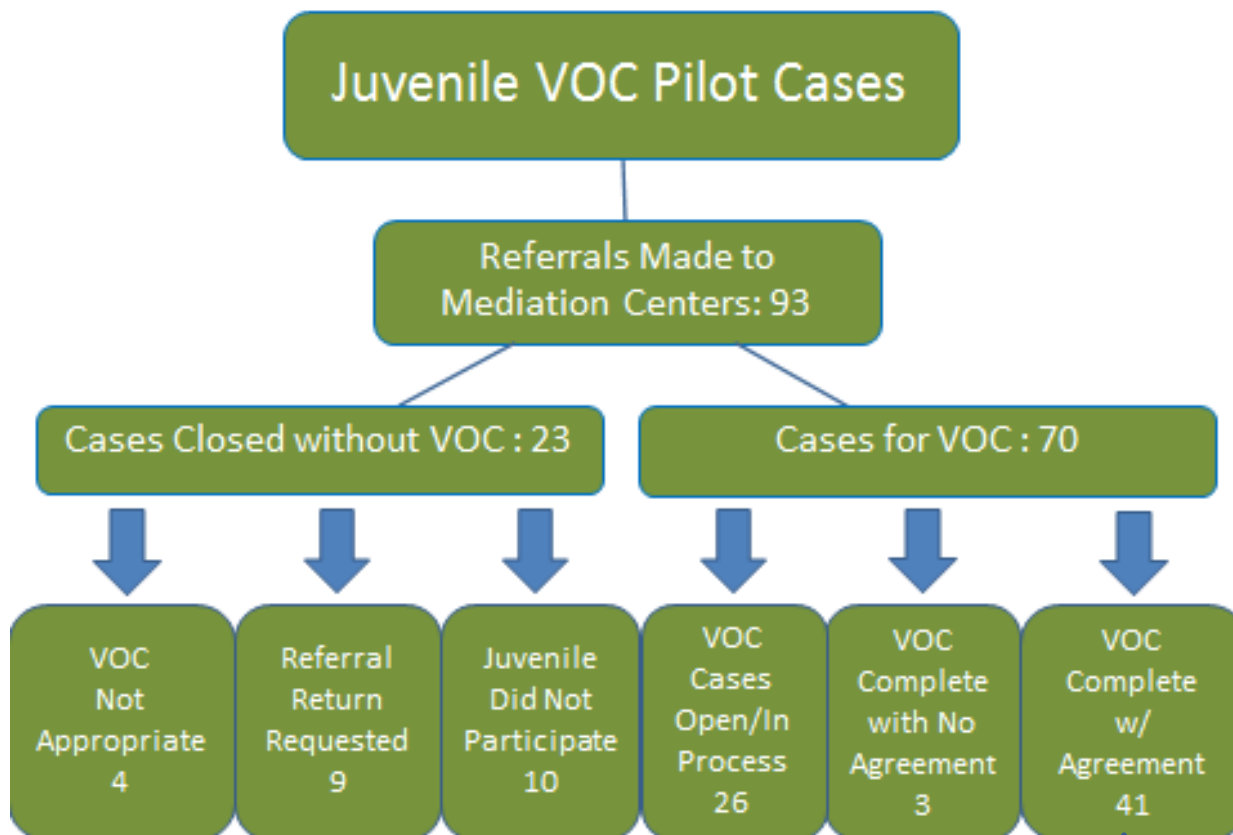
Educational meetings initiated by the Office of Dispute Resolution, Mediation West, Concord Mediation and The Mediation Center have been held in Scottsbluff, Lincoln, and Omaha with Juvenile and County Judges, County Attorneys, Probation Chiefs and staff, diversion programs, public school administrators, guardians ad litem, and nonprofit social service agencies (including a youth homeless shelter a child advocacy center). Victim Offender Conferencing was a session topic presented by Dr. Umbreit and Nebraska stakeholders at the Nebraska State Bar Association Annual Conference.

A presentation to all Probation staff in Lancaster County on the VOC process was attended by approximately 50 people. Numerous presentations have also been made at the local “through the eyes of the child” teams. On a statewide basis, panelists including juvenile court judge and county attorney presented on VOC to statewide county attorneys conference. Participants at the Heartland Juvenile Services Association conference learned about VOC and its goals.

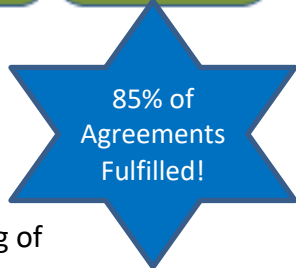
A presentation was given at the Omaha Public Schools Best Practices Summit and to the Westside Public Schools Department of Psychology in Omaha. Workshops are being planned introducing the concepts of restorative justice and VOC to Douglas County schools and agencies. An afternoon training was provided for Lincoln Public Schools administrators and teachers on VOC and how it is being used for youth in school involved in law violations and who are being served through a school based diversion project of the county attorney's office. Additional training was provided at Detention for Administrators and teachers of VOC. Numerous collaborative meetings were held with the new Restorative Justice Coordinator hired for Lincoln Public Schools.



The next chart shows the flow of cases as they have been referred to VOC services provided by the three nonprofit mediation centers in this pilot from March 2015 through July 2016.



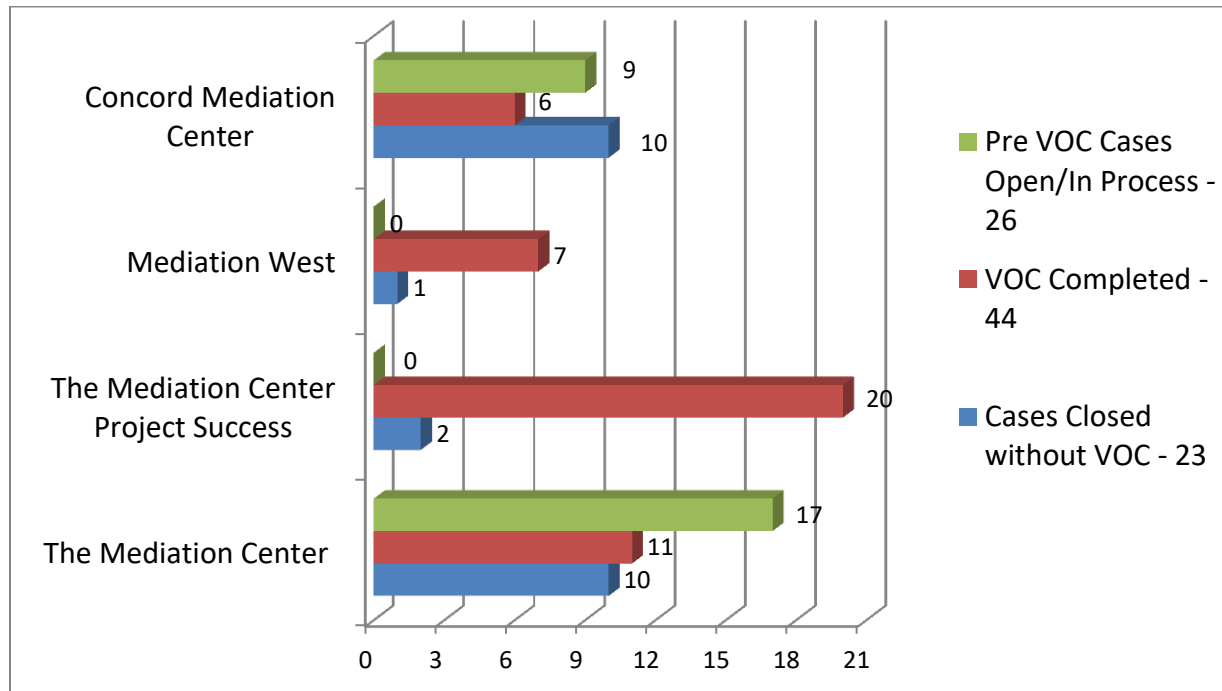
As this chart depicts, of 44 completed VOC's with juveniles, 41 Resulted in a reparations agreement to be fulfilled after the VOC. By the end of July 2016, 85% of the agreements (35 cases) had been successfully completed by the juveniles, with an additional 6 juveniles in the process of fulfilling their agreements. It is very possible that the continued tracking of pilot outcomes will show 100% of agreements fulfilled.



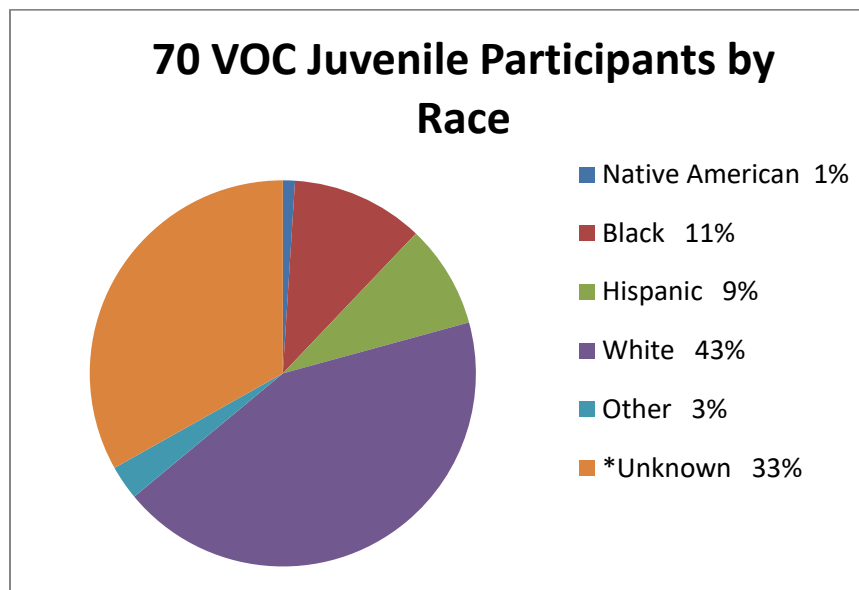
The chart also depicts cases closed without VOC services. Once a mediation center receives a referral, situations may arise at any time during the case management process that prevent the parties from engaging in VOC. During the intake process, mediation center staff along with the referral source or other stakeholders may determine VOC is not appropriate given the circumstances. At times, the probation officer or other referral source may recall the referral. This may occur when all other probation conditions have been met and restitution has been paid prior to the VOC. In rare instances, the referral may be recalled if the juvenile has had another offense since the referral was made but prior to the VOC. Last, it may happen that the referred juvenile doesn't follow through with the VOC for any number of reasons. In some

cases the juvenile was unwilling to participate, and in others it was due to circumstances, such as the family moving out of state, or not being reachable. Regardless of the reason for referred cases being closed without receiving VOC, mediation centers still expend resources on these cases for as long as they have them on their case load.

### Juvenile VOC Case Status by each Mediation Center (March 2015-July 2016)



### Juvenile Participant Demographics

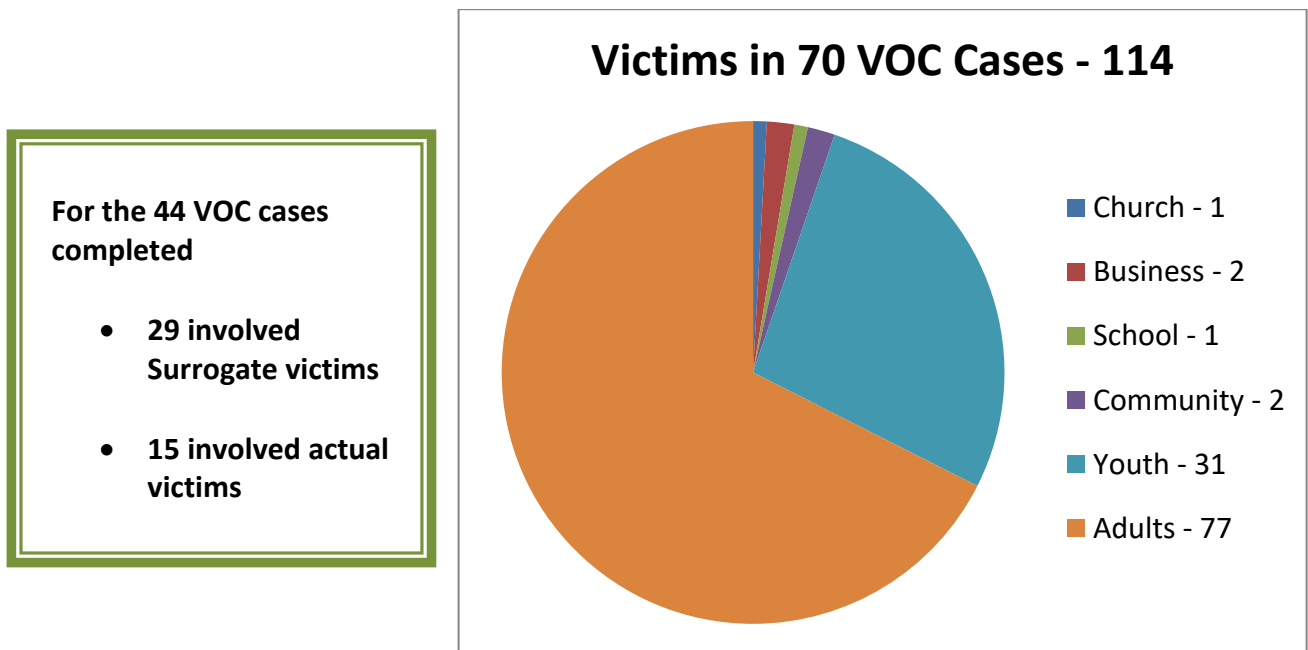


Gender	#	%
Male	58	83%
Female	12	17%
Age	#	%
Under 12	3	4%
13-15 yrs	34	49%
16-18 yrs	31	44%
unknown	2	3%

\*Race not tracked for Project Success

## What we know about the Victims

For each VOC case, while only one juvenile who caused harm is involved, the number of victims range from only one to as many as seven individuals, and in two cases a broader community was considered the victim. As a result, 114 individuals and entities were reported as victims in the 70 VOC cases. The VOC conference includes victim representation, either with a surrogate<sup>3</sup> or the actual victim, plus support people for the victim as well as for the juvenile who caused the harm. A total of 136 individuals participated in the 44 VOC's already completed.



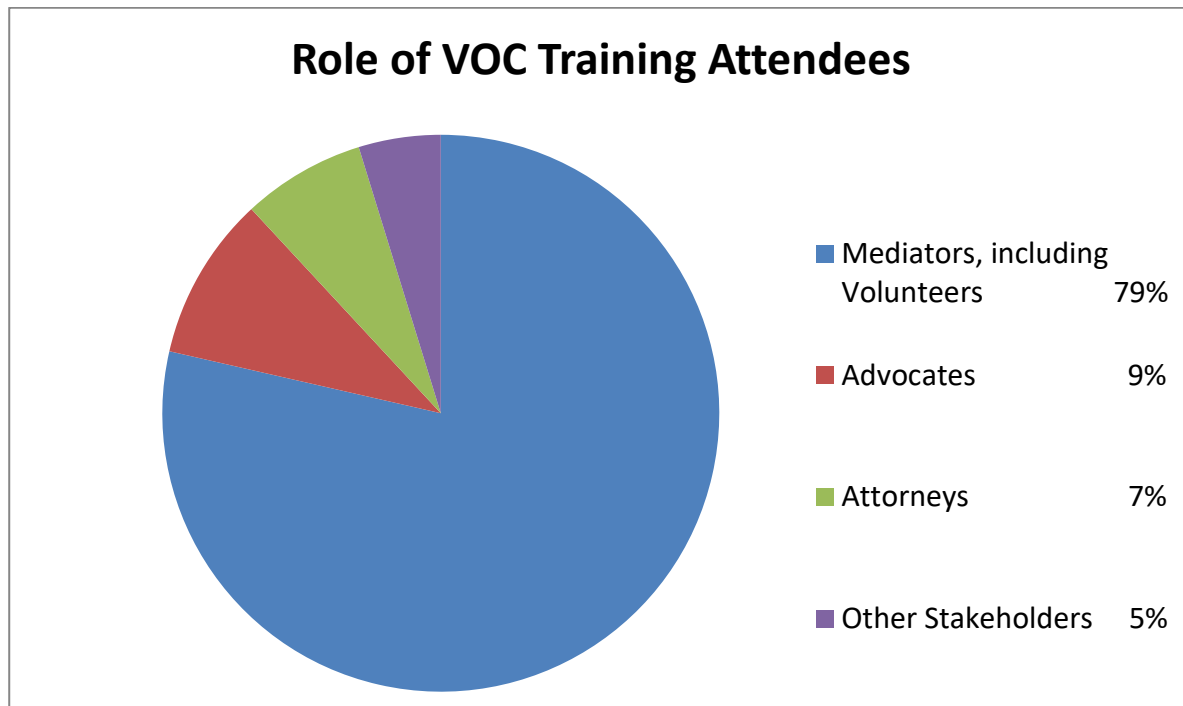
## Juvenile VOC Pilot Outcome Measures

### Increased Capacity and Awareness

To measure increased provider capacity and awareness about the value of VOC, the 71 VOC training attendees were asked to complete a brief post-training survey about their experiences. Fifty-four percent of attendees responded to the web-based post-training survey they received via email. Survey results show a strong positive impact on those who attended.

<sup>3</sup> A victim surrogate is a person who has been a victim of a similar crime who is willing to represent the victim's experience in a VOC, even though they weren't a victim in the specific case. Often surrogates are willing to participate in VOC when the actual victims of the case are not yet ready to face the person who caused them harm.

## Who Attended VOC Training

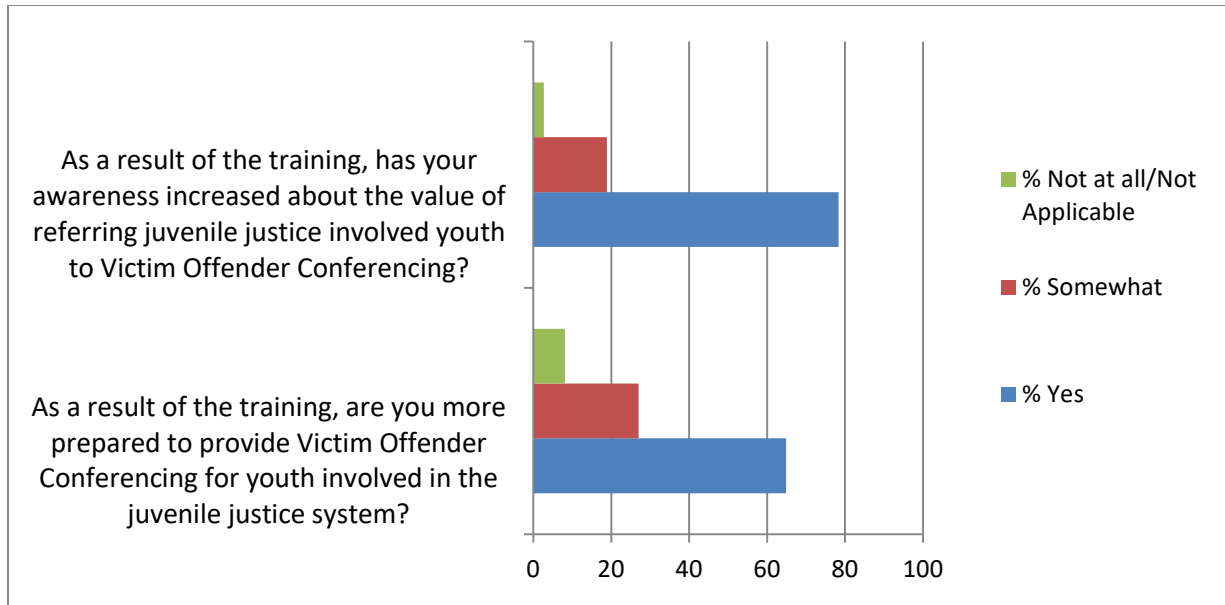


Projected Outcome: Statewide provider capacity to provide evidence-based VOC for youth in the juvenile justice system will increase.

**Result: 65% responded yes + 27% somewhat = 92% increased capacity.**

Projected Outcome: Decision makers (judges, probation staff, county attorneys, and advocates) will increase awareness of the value of referring appropriate juvenile justice youth to VOC.

**Result: 78% responded yes + 19% somewhat = 97% increased awareness.**



\*N/A responses refer to attendees who stated their role does not include providing Victim Offender Conferencing services.

Relating to an answer of *somewhat*, one attendee commented,

**“I have prior experience and training in VOC, as a result, I have already been a strong advocate for this process and felt comfortable as a mediator who has previously conducted VOC in communities.”**

Additional survey responses from VOC training attendees:

**Overall how would you rate the VOC training?**

Responses	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
	0	5.41%	29.73%	35.14%	29.73%

**Overall, what is your rating of the written materials provided during the VOC?**

Responses	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
	2.7%	10.81%	29.73%	37.84%	18.92%

**What is your rating of the VOC trainers?**

Responses	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
	0	0	24.32%	35.14%	40.54%



**Feedback  
from VOC  
Training  
Attendees**

**“I think the training was great! The issue seems to be in getting the referrals and making sure it is sustainable.”**

**“I am impressed with the responses of the juveniles I have seen in this process. It may not work every time – but when it works, it is really very good.”**

**“I appreciate more written material to supplement the course discussions.”**

**“I believe the juvenile justice conferencing process can help juveniles develop a sense of empathy and community and (hopefully) reintegrate them into the community and deter future offenses in a positive manner.”**

*“I think the main difficulty with the training I attended was that everyone was still figuring out what VOC would look like in Nebraska in concrete terms.”*

*“Great job! My favorite part was when people shared their unique true experiences with the VOC process,” commented another training attendee.*

## **Referral Process**

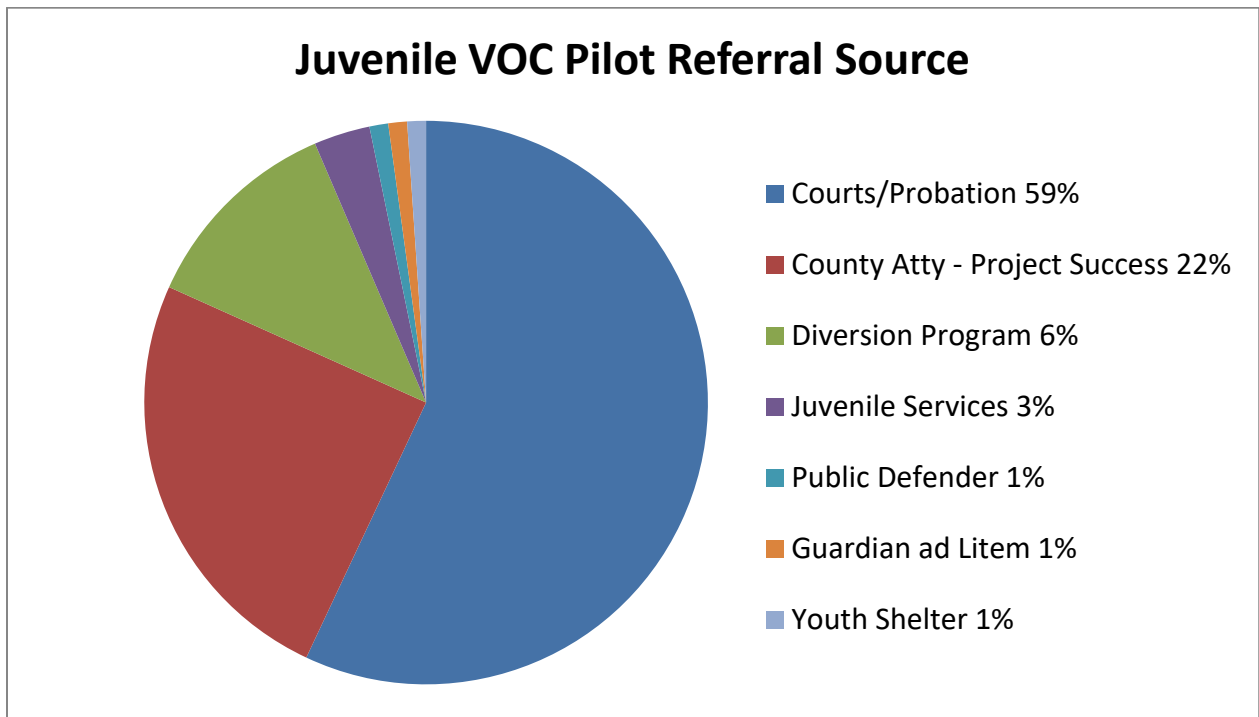
Since this is the first year of the pilot, an increase in referrals is difficult to measure without a baseline of VOC services from previous years. Outcome data from this pilot may serve as the baseline for future years. The mediation centers receiving cases have documented where referrals are coming from, which is shown in the chart below, and are educating stakeholders on an ongoing basis to increase referrals. Challenges in the referral process are addressed in the process evaluation section of this report.

Projected Outcome: Probation staff and courts will increase recommendations and orders for victim offender conferencing in appropriate juvenile justice cases.

**Result: Of 93 juveniles referred for VOC, 54 were from probation and courts.**

Projected Outcome: Victim advocates and attorneys will increase referrals to victim offender conferencing for youth offenders.

**Result: Of 93 juveniles referred for VOC, 39 were from attorneys, advocates and other providers of services to youth.**



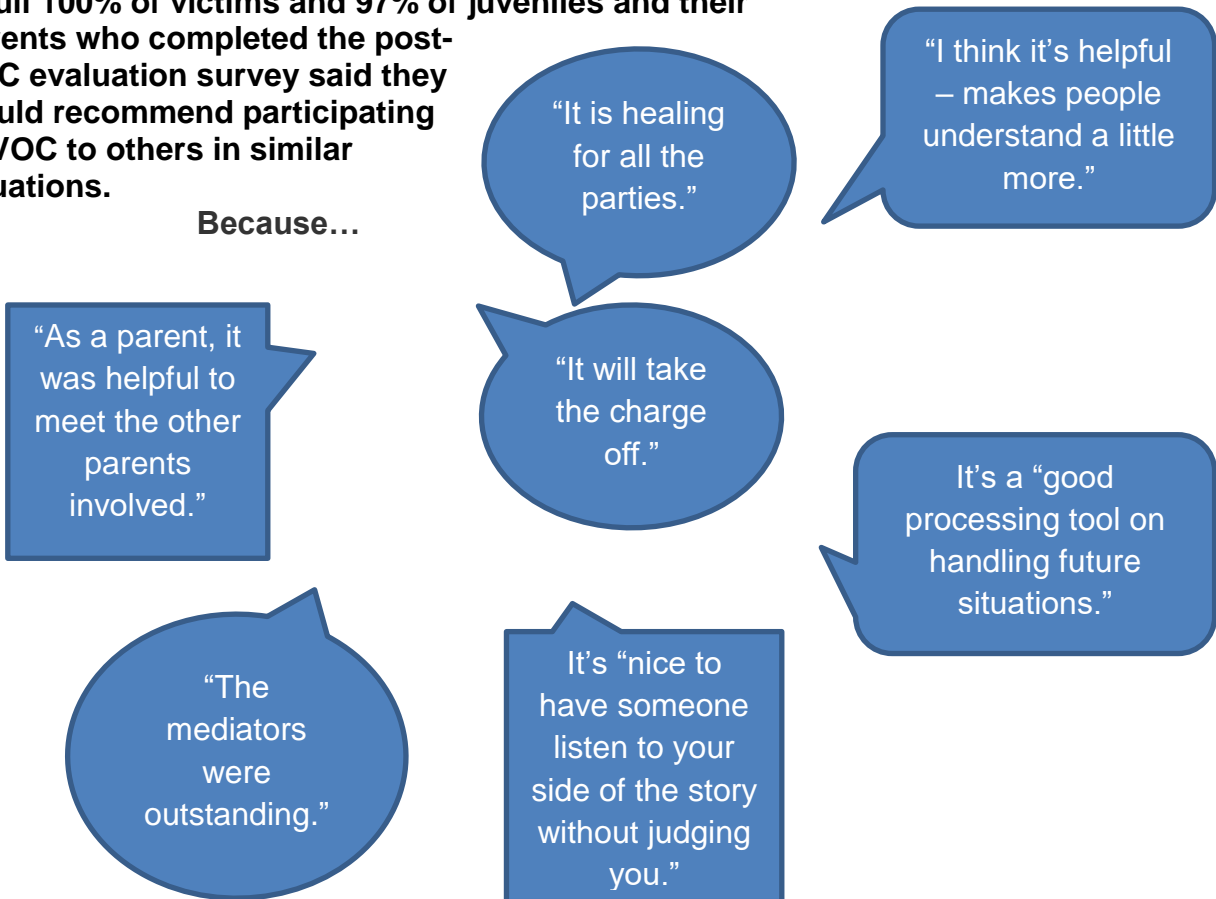
At the start of the VOC pilot, the original focus was on probation offices being the primary referral sources. However, after stakeholder meetings in Douglas County, it was determined that diversion programs through the county attorneys' office were essential front-end referral sources. Moreover, once filings occur, judges are key stakeholders referring youth to VOC as part of the probation plan.

## VOC Participant Satisfaction and Benefits

As outcome measurements are established for VOC services in Nebraska, just as with referral increases, the pilot may set a baseline for choices made by juveniles and victims to participate or not in VOC, as well as for setting a baseline for measuring the satisfaction of participants. With that said, the impact of VOC in juvenile cases is most promising when looking at the feedback provided through post-VOC evaluation surveys by victims, juveniles and parents involved.

**A full 100% of victims and 97% of juveniles and their parents who completed the post-VOC evaluation survey said they would recommend participating in VOC to others in similar situations.**

Because...



Projected Outcome: Referred victims and juveniles show an increase in choosing VOC.

**Result: 10 of 93 juveniles referred to VOC have thus far chosen not to participate or were unreachable. Victims in 29 of the 44 completed VOC’s chose not to participate, so victim surrogates served in their absence.**

Projected Outcome: Seventy-five percent of victims and juveniles will experience an increase in satisfaction with the justice system.

**Result: After VOC, 81% of juveniles and 89% of victims who completed a post VOC evaluation survey reported feeling the criminal justice system was more responsive to their needs.**

Projected Outcome: Eighty-five percent of the VOC cases will result in a written reparation agreement with reparation or restitution to the victim.

**Result: Of 44 completed VOC's, 41 (93%) resulted in a reparation agreement.**

Projected Outcome: Victims involved in VOC will see an increase in restitution. Juveniles achieve a high completion rate of reparation agreement conditions.

**Result: Of 41 completed VOC's with reparation agreements, 35 (85%) of the agreements have been fulfilled. The remaining 6 agreements continue in the process of being fulfilled.**

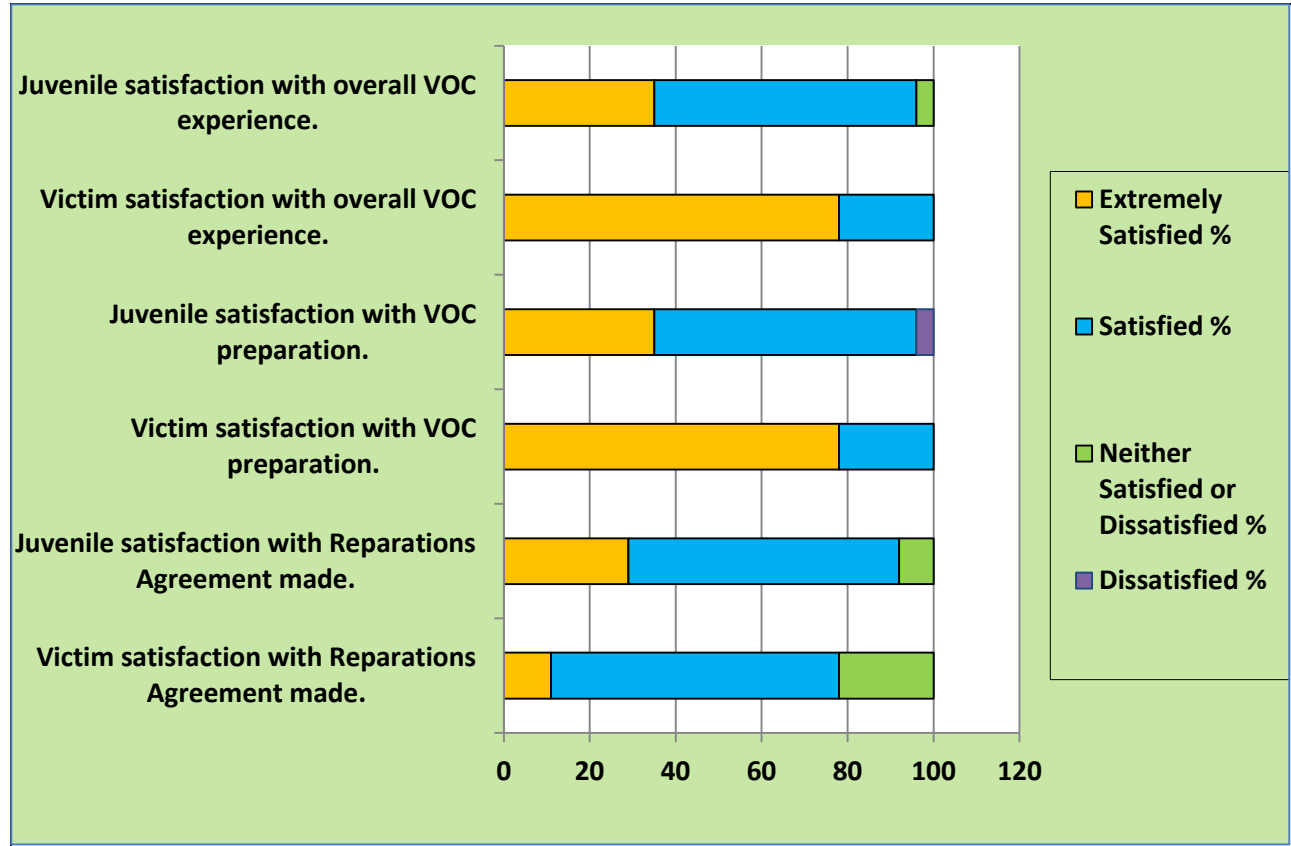
### **Additional Post VOC Evaluation Survey Results for Victims and Juveniles**

Post VOC evaluation surveys show 97% of victims and juveniles/guardians are satisfied or extremely satisfied with the overall VOC process, while 3% reported being neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall process. None of the participants who completed the post VOC evaluation survey reported being dissatisfied with the overall process.

Of the juveniles/guardians completing the post VOC survey, 92% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the reparations agreement made, while 78% of victims reported satisfaction with the agreement made. The remaining 8% of juveniles and 22% of victims

expressed neutral feelings about the reparations agreement – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. None of the respondents reported they were dissatisfied with the reparations agreement made.

### Post VOC Juvenile and Victim Satisfaction with Experience



**Victim Comments**

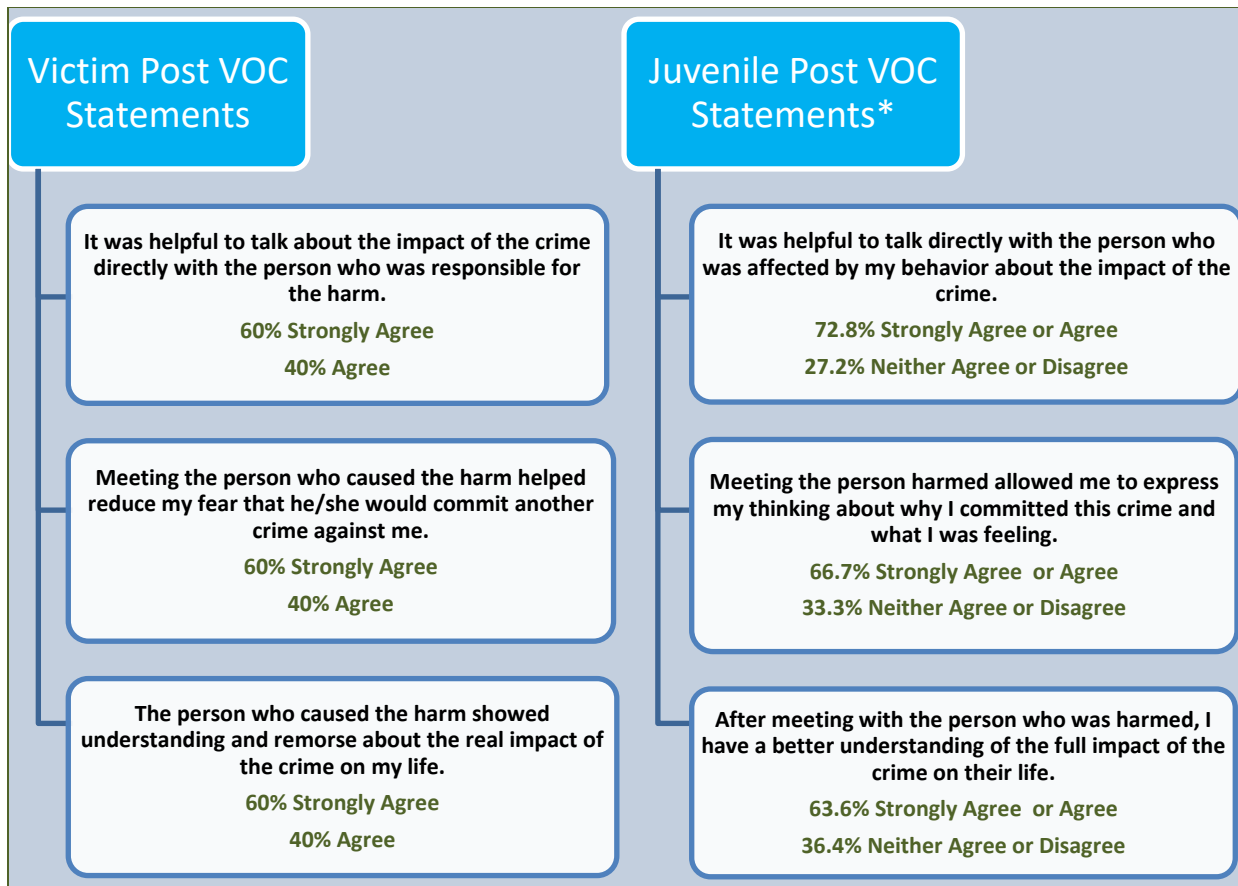
"I think this was a great opportunity for the teen and will help him learn for his mistakes."

"It was done very well. Thank you."

**Juvenile Comments**

"Good program."

"Me and my family are fully satisfied. Thank you."



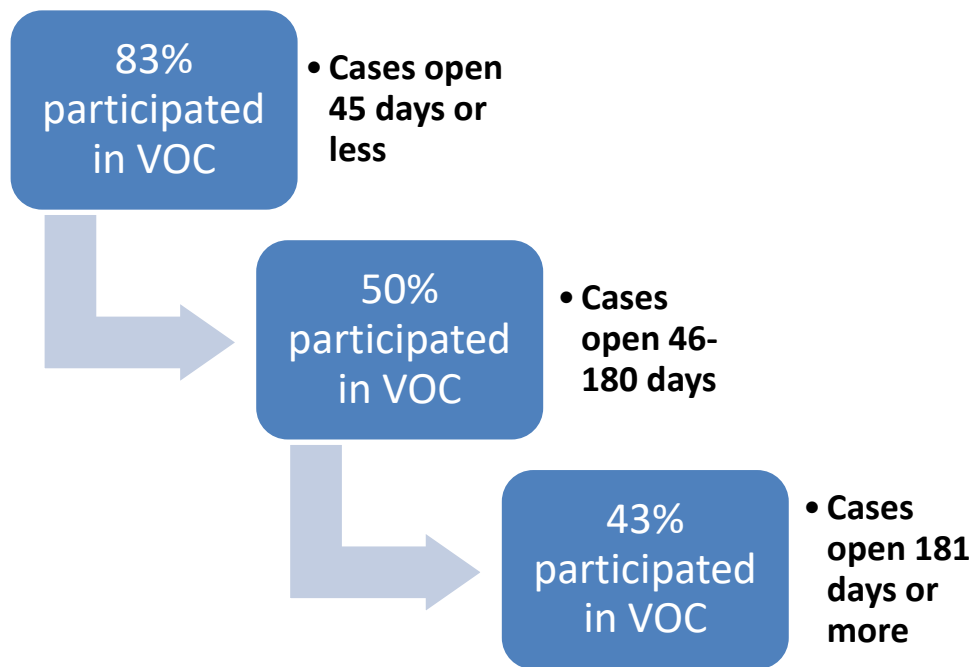
\*Note: Most of the juvenile responses of neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statements above were cases in which a surrogate served in the conference in replace of the actual victim impacted by the incident.

## Length of Open Cases

Protocol for the Juvenile VOC pilot has been developed based on best practices in service delivery. The protocol a timeline for the process of contacting the juvenile and victim once the referral is received, holding preparation meetings, and following through with the VOC. If no contact is made by the mediation center staff by day 45 after the referral has been received, it is recommended that the case be returned to the referral source.

Progress made on each case according to the protocol timeline has not been reported for this evaluation; however the evaluator was given the opening and closing dates of cases along with the case outcomes. The length of cases that were reported as closed by July 31, 2016 ranged from a low of two days to a high of 303 days. Variations among mediation centers and complications of specific cases have an influence on the amount of time it takes to conclude a VOC case from initial intake to the successful fulfillment of a reparations agreement, yet the data supports the conclusion that timeliness in case processing does matter. Eighty-three percent of juvenile cases that were closed within 45 days of receiving the referral had a

successful VOC with 100% of the reparations agreements fulfilled. For cases that ranged from 45 days to 180 days in length, only 50% of the cases followed through with a VOC, and for cases open longer than 180 days, only 43% followed through with a VOC.



## Tracking Recidivism Rate

Victim Offender Conferencing is an evidence-based practice that has been proven to reduce recidivism for juveniles who have participated in this process. In the original planning for the Nebraska juvenile VOC pilot, recidivism outcome measures were established with the intent to document changes in recidivism in the specific instances of Nebraska juvenile VOC participants.

Nebraska’s Supreme Court adopted a uniform definition of recidivism in 2013. As applied to juveniles, the Court’s definition of recidivism means measuring certain re-offenses within one year of being successfully released from a probation or problem-solving court program.<sup>4</sup> Automation to track recidivism is still in the developmental phase, yet the Court administration has the ability to check data for individual juvenile cases under this definition. Given the length of probation and limited time of the VOC pilot, sufficient data to include in this report is not yet available; however tracking recidivism for juveniles involved in the VOC pilot has begun, and will continue to expand as systems allow.

<sup>4</sup> For the full Supreme court definition, go to <https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/supreme-court-rules/9665/%C2%A7-1-1001-uniform-definitions-recidivism-nebraska-state-probation-and>

## Return on Investment

Two additional outcome measures were identified in the original juvenile VOC pilot proposal that will not be addressed in this evaluation report. Both relate to the return on investment by the courts and stakeholders, which may support the case for expansion of VOC if the results are favorable. Both also require more in-depth analysis once the pilot is beyond its infancy stage of development. The original proposed outcomes included: 1) Participation in VOC will shorten the lifespan of a juvenile court case, and 2) VOC is demonstrated to be more cost effective in handling juvenile cases for County and State governments.

## Process Evaluation

To evaluate the juvenile VOC pilot implementation process, individual meetings were held with key staff at three mediation centers and the ODR, one group evaluation session was facilitated, and process feedback was provided, during monthly program conference call meetings. CRJP consultants have been available during these monthly meetings as well as for individual coaching sessions throughout the planning and implementation process in order for problem solving and guidance in handling unforeseen or unusual circumstances.

## Stories of Transformation

One of the challenges with any program evaluation is conveying the passion and feelings about transformation that occurs for the people involved – telling the story so that the reader has a deep understanding of the impact and what’s different as a result. For this reason, we started the process evaluation by centering on stories of transformation with the key program staff.

### OVERCOMING FEAR...

A grandmother of a youth who caused harm shared, “I did not understand how this would work for my grandson and was very worried. It turned out to be a great success as the victims were not vicious as I feared. When I questioned if my grandson was ready to face them, the mediator went way beyond the call of duty to come to us and talk to my grandson one on one. I am totally impressed and thankful. They not only worked with my grandson, but also were concerned about all of us and how we were handling the conference and time leading up to the conference as we prepared for it.”

“Very good and gracious people. God bless you as you handle these difficult situations.”



## **What have mediators and staff witnessed during the VOC pilot that inspires them to continue this work?**

Mediators shared stories about the power of people, who have shared a common wounding experience, sitting together face to face to listen deeply and also share their personal impact. A shift in energy that is hard to describe but can be felt by everyone involved happens when deep listening occurs. The room is filled with an anxious tension, which seems to lift and be released at a single moment of understanding. People on both sides, those harmed and those responsible for the harm, begin to recognize the humanity in each other and healing becomes a real possibility. The process of making amends is heart-felt on both sides, and empathy grows.

One facilitator shared the story of a youth, who during the initial meeting to prepare for the VOC, was very angry and adamant that he would commit the same assault again. It took a great deal of patience and compassion on the part of the facilitator to help this young person be open to another way. Once the youth went through the VOC process, he turned his thinking around when he listened to the other side and understood the impact his actions had on others.

A program director talked about a situation where the person harmed, who worked at a major big box store in town, came into the VOC process as the victim representative, and held little hope for the youth involved. He experienced a transformative moment when he met the youth and heard his story, and also felt heard by the youth. By the end of the VOC, the man was offering ways he could help the youth make good decisions and agreed to mentor him at the store. The promise of VOC gives mediation center staff and volunteers a renewed inspiration to continue this work. As one center director proclaimed,

**“The VOC pilot has saved our center. A mediator would have left but is now energized, and we have a new pool of volunteers.”**

Additional stories of transformation from VOC facilitators are found in Appendix A.

## **What’s Working Well**

Once all three mediation centers had the experience of carrying out full VOC cases from beginning to end, we asked the question, what is working well with the VOC pilot. Three main strengths emerged from the discussions that were in common among centers.

### **1. Internal processes, protocols and training:**

Operational processes, protocols and necessary forms are in place, with coaching/mentoring from consultants. Directors expressed confidence in their internal

processes when cases come in, and in knowing what to do with cases. When questions arise, staff emphasized, the consultants “have been a huge help.”

The VOC training has also contributed to the success of the pilot. People who have gone through the training have been very passionate to serve as facilitators. One center director stated, “people who are interested in volunteering are all in, very engaged.” Those trained see the value of VOC. It has brought in a new pool of volunteers who have now facilitated VOC cases.

## **2. Relationship building and partnerships:**

Stronger relationships are being built with Judges, Probation, County Attorney, and Diversion offices, as well as other potential referral sources and stakeholders. While this is essential and a strength resulting from the pilot project, mediation center directors stressed that the process of reaching out, educating, building relationships and getting increased referrals as a result takes more time than what anyone expected. When considering the need to build relationships to get cases referred for VOC, one center director shared, “We have really grown our relationship in promoting and integrating VOC with probation, but it took 6 to 9 months and our relationship was already good.”

At the State level, justice system stakeholders are favorable and political support is growing. The mediation center staff feel supported by top level administrators and appreciate their backing.

## **3. Impact on youth, families and those harmed:**

First and foremost, the impact of Victim Offender Conferencing upon youth who have committed the offence, their families, and victims and those who have been harmed has been significant and is working well.

Additionally, mediation center staff report that between parents and youth involved in committing the offence they’re seeing improved relationships between parents and kids. The VOC pilot is also facilitating conversations about connections between school, parents, and kids, looking at both strengths and barriers for the families impacted. Speaking to this connection, one mediation center director said, “It has been a dream; to meet with parents and kids in a conference to talk about curfew, drug use and whatever else is the challenge.”

## **Areas to be Strengthened**

When asked about the areas not working as well, three main challenges were identified.

## **1. Relationships and partnerships – the other side of the story:**

Much effort has gone into relationship building and partnerships to build support for the VOC pilot, with priority of getting youth referred to VOC, yet mediation center staff expressed concern that it wasn't enough. Change takes time and outreach takes both time and resources. As is often the case with systems change, stakeholders may have buy-in at one level, but it doesn't necessarily equate to change and action at another level. Relationship building and partnerships need to expand in both breadth and depth.

Shifting the way of operating for juvenile cases has a ripple effect on a complex network of referral sources and on agencies to which youth are referred for different types of interventions. In some cases it's difficult to negotiate new boundaries in service provision, with clarity about VOC and the role of mediation centers. Mediation centers need to make the case for VOC being a greater value than perhaps another service on the long list of juvenile diversion and probation options. To do so requires a fine balance between respecting other providers and competing for finite resources and opportunities for youth.

## **2. Tracking outcomes and diversion**

A significant benefit of VOC is a reduction in the recidivism for youth who have been court involved, and prevention of court involvement through diversion. This has been documented through empirical research in other states, and one goal of the juvenile VOC pilot was to prove its effectiveness in reducing recidivism as it is applied in Nebraska. Since tracking reduction in recidivism due to VOC for court involved and diversion involved youth is very difficult in the short term, a longer term strategy is needed.

## **3. Capacity building**

The juvenile VOC pilot is unarguably in its infancy stage of development and is showing great promise as a new restorative way to work with court involved or diversion involved youth. Capacity building at all levels requires an upfront investment as planning and development is carried out for long term sustainability. The basic VOC training provided thus far for the VOC pilot program has been solid, however an advanced training will help address complex cases and provide more case scenarios to build staff and volunteer capacity.

## **Lessons Learned**

To surface lessons learned in the group evaluation session, mediation center and ODR staff were asked the question, "What advice would you give yourself if you could go back to the beginning?" Their responses provide good advice for how to best move forward with pilot expansion statewide, as well as for managing growth of VOC in the three pilot districts. They said –

- Involve stakeholders on the ground in the grant writing and program planning process. They found they were fighting local stakeholder resistance from the beginning, when people asked, “Why wasn’t I aware of this and brought in earlier?” One director suggested the entire first year of the pilot could have focused on program planning, relationship building and partnerships, so that all were ready to go on solid footing by the end of the year.
- Part of the planning process should include discussion and negotiation of roles and responsibilities among collaborative partners. It may be helpful to develop memorandums of understanding (MOU) prior to program implementation. It was the sentiment of a couple program staff that it’s difficult to create an MOU once the train is moving, so to speak. It would be very meaningful for the supportive stakeholders within the justice system hierarchy to use their leadership among their relationship circles to say “use mediation centers first.” This may have encouraged a better flow of referrals for VOC in a shorter timeframe.
- Set more reasonable goals for the number of VOC cases when the pilot is still in its infancy. For instance, Mediation West had experience with just two cases utilizing victim offender mediation prior to the pilot, so the goal of 40 VOC cases during the first year of the pilot was overwhelming. Additionally, it takes time for people to change their decision making even when they are supporters. Examples were provided of those in the position to refer cases being fully supportive; however referrals are slow to come in.
- Early on in the pilot, consultation would have been helpful from the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking on systems dynamics/development, marketing and outreach. This could be included as part of the training.

## Program Sustainability Assessment

**Appendix B – Sustainability Assessment:** Each program sustainability section includes the overall average rating (on a scale of one to seven), the average for each organization, and ratings of a 4 or below by entity for each sustainability factor. Scores of a 5 or above are available but not provided in this report.

As juvenile VOC and other restorative justice approaches are customized and integrated to meet the specific needs and culture of the communities in which they’re implemented, finding the balance between high program fidelity and adaptability is essential for program improvements to be made in Nebraska’s juvenile justice system. Likewise, what it takes to sustain high quality VOC programs has not been given the attention it deserves throughout the U.S.

With this in mind, a sustainability assessment tool was chosen to be used with mediation center staff and

ODR as part of the overall Juvenile VOC Pilot program. The selected *Program Sustainability Assessment Tool* was developed and copyrighted by the Center for Public Health Systems Science within the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. More information about the sustainability framework or tool can be found at <http://www.sustaintool.org>.

Directors of three mediation centers, the Office of Dispute Resolution Director and ODR Advisory Council completed the assessment, with results outlined below. Appendix B provides a compilation of some of the more noteworthy assessment responses.

It should be noted that this is a self-assessment, and while a rating scale is used for measurement, center to center comparisons can't accurately be made. For instance, one person's rating of 7 could carry the same meaning as another person's rating of 5. Keeping that in mind, general trends may be seen that identify areas for further development moving forward. Most importantly, this assessment provides a guide for further discussion and strategic planning. To fully benefit from it, it is recommended the VOC pilot staff and stakeholders spend time together to review, discuss and build upon any revelations coming from the sustainability assessment.

The initial snapshot of areas of strength and areas to further develop may be a conversation starter about how to increase cross-center collaboration, training and technical assistance. Lastly, when interpreting the results of the sustainability assessment, it's important to recognize the ratings as perceptions that are fluid and likely to shift some during a strategic planning process. It may be that areas listed as strengths need more attention than what this snapshot infers, while areas listed as needing more development may have areas of strength to build upon.

## Sustainability Areas of Strength

- **Program Adaptation:** All of the mediation centers and ODR ranked their program adaptability as strong overall. Mediation West was most confident in their program adaptability, ranking it to a very great extent.
- **Partnerships, political support and strategic planning** are areas in which The Mediation Center has the most confidence in their ability to sustain.
- **Organizational capacity** is an area of strength for Concord Mediation Center.
- **Program evaluation** is an area of strength for Mediation West.

## Sustainability Areas for Further Development

- **Communications:** All mediation centers and ODR had communications as an area with less capacity.
- **Organizational capacity**, while strong in a number of areas, all mediation centers and ODR

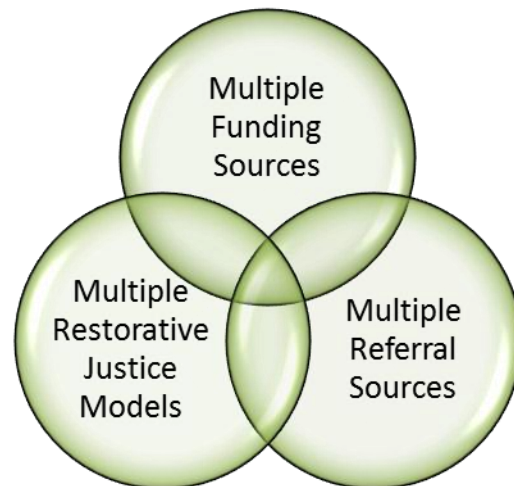
identified a shortage of program staff to meet goals as an area for development.

- **Partnerships, funding stability, and strategic planning** are areas for further development for Mediation West, Concord Mediation Center, and ODR.
- **Political support** is an area for further development for Mediation West and Concord Mediation Center.

## Recommendations for Nebraska’s Juvenile VOC Program - Phase II

Solid momentum and success is inspiring mediation centers to expand their impact with the juvenile VOC pilot program. The mediation centers providing services in the first year are moving towards the engagement of judges, probation, county attorneys, diversion as well as schools, with a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. At the same time, they are continuing to receive referrals for court involved youth. Mediation center directors from districts not included in the first year of the juvenile VOC pilot have participated in monthly conference meetings and have attended the VOC training. They have expressed interest in being a part of a statewide expansion of VOC during what is being proposed as a "phase II" of this pilot.

The theme for Phase II of the juvenile VOC pilot can be visualized as a solid triad foundation for long term sustainability: the triad of multiple funding sources, multiple referral sources and multiple restorative justice models to best serve youth, their families, victims and communities.



Specific recommendations for phase II of the juvenile VOC program have been developed with long term sustainability of high quality services in mind. Recommendations do overlap and build upon each other, thus a recommendation in one area will also serve to enhance another.

Recommendations...

### **For strategic planning:**

- Engage key stakeholders in a strategic planning process to create a 5-year comprehensive blueprint for the use of restorative justice practices involving diversion and court involved youth at the local, district and statewide levels. Strategic planning will include practical steps and timelines to build the foundational triad of multiple funding sources, multiple referral sources and multiple restorative justice models to best serve youth, their families, victims and communities. Planning will also focus on maintaining high fidelity to best practices in the implementation of juvenile VOC.

### **For funding stability:**

- Move towards long term sustainable funding by getting VOC as an appropriation in the Judicial Branch and State budget and look at other justice system resources that can be redirected for VOC in the future. A diversified funding proposal could be included in the strategic plan with a combination of Sherwood Foundation and other private foundation grant funds, state general funds, court fees, and school district fees. In the first three years, greater investment may be needed from funders who are already engaged to allow adequate time to diversify the funding portfolio.

### **For ongoing stakeholder engagement, partnerships, and communication:**

- Hire a Statewide Restorative Justice Coordinator to build the relationship network, gain political support and lead systems change efforts.
- Adhere to best practices protocol to ensure cases are handled in a timely manner with optimum outcomes for youth, their families, victims and communities.
- Develop memorandums of understanding (MOU) with clear expectations between mediation centers, referral sources, and other stakeholders prior to program implementation. This will support high fidelity to best practices and strengthen accountability among partners, as well as provide protocol for addressing challenges when they arise.
- Ultimately the impact of the juvenile VOC program will only be meaningful if it is utilized, and that means referrals must increase. The priority for stakeholder engagement, partnerships and communications is to increase referrals and expand the positive impact of VOC.

### **For organizational capacity building:**

- With a focus on sustainability, include advanced training with more case scenarios and a train-the-trainer model to build the training capacity and volunteer facilitator pool

within the state. Incorporate training on outreach and marketing of restorative justice program models.

- Specifically reach out to ethnic minority communities to educate them about restorative justice and the juvenile VOC program, recruit them as volunteer or paid VOC facilitators, and provide training options that encourage their participation.
- Each mediation center should also have a restorative justice staff position to build at the ground level, ensure high program fidelity to the process and results, and continue to build capacity. It's also important to recognize the capacity and skills already present among the State's mediation center staff and volunteers, and build upon those strengths through cross-mentoring, training and technical support.

### **For program evaluation and adaptability:**

- Continue working with the Courts for the tracking and reporting of juvenile recidivism over the long term. In addition to the court system making recidivism data available, mediation center and ODR stakeholders could identify outcome measures and local resources for which the data is more readily available to them.
- Also ensure that outcome and reporting tools are consistently applied across mediation centers and data reported to ODR, so that data can easily be quantified and have the same meaning. This may require minor changes to the case manager database system, and should be accompanied by training and ongoing technical support.
- Include return on investment evaluation in the second phase of the juvenile VOC pilot.
- Flexibility in program language will need more discussion and adaptation to bridge the way mediation center staff and volunteers work with youth and those harmed on a daily basis, with language common to the operations of the judicial system. Significant effort has already gone into the language of program policies, protocols and forms to ensure high fidelity to VOC best practices. Yet feedback from VOC mediators suggests a need to continue to find language that is more humanistic. For instance, do we refer to a court involved youth as a youth, juvenile, delinquent or offender?

## **Conclusion**

Nebraska's strong network of mediation centers, Office of Dispute Resolution and Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation for the Nebraska Judicial Branch, have the expertise and commitment on which to build impactful victim offender conferencing as a restorative measure for youth system wide. The evaluation shows promising results achieved during the first year of the juvenile VOC pilot program in three court districts, using VOC for early intervention as well as for youth already court-involved. Momentum is growing to deepen and broaden services statewide.



Mediation centers and ODR leadership have been forthcoming in acknowledging the challenges experienced as they work together to change the way juvenile cases are handled, and show an ongoing commitment to program fidelity, quality and sustainability. All acknowledge change takes time. Stakeholders are commended for their work together to achieve a more humanistic and restorative justice system for youth.

## Appendix A

### Case Stories of Impact

These stories are shared by the VOC facilitators, mediation center staff and volunteer surrogates who were directly involved in cases.

**Case 1** - While this case was closed before the process could be finished, there are some important details that made the work on this case a success. The case was brought to our attention by the guardian ad litem (GAL), who was hoping that the family could find some healing. The juvenile had allegations against him for inappropriate sexual conduct with 2 younger foster kids in the home. Through the investigation of those charges, it was discovered that the juvenile was himself a victim of sexual contact from an adult family friend. In the process of the investigation, additional juvenile victims of the adult offender were found.

Because our juvenile who caused harm was also a victim, because of the nature of the offense, and because of the age of the victims, we knew this process would look different than a typical VOC. We spent over three hours in session with the juvenile and his parents on two different occasions and were able to work with them on healing for the family. With the juvenile, we had a discussion about his role as a hero for coming forward and helping find justice for himself and the of their victims, as well as protecting future kids from becoming victims. We also worked with the parents who were experiencing a sense of loss from losing their accreditation as a foster home and complications the mother experienced in her employment in daycare.

After those two meetings with the family, as a group (family, mediators and GAL) we decided that we would wait to move forward with the conference process until after the adult offender's court process was over in April 2016 (the case was referred in late 2015). The co-mediators in the case agreed that the conclusion of the case where our youth was the victim would need to happen before the juvenile and his parents could move themselves out of the victim role into the offender role. A conference preparation meeting was scheduled for May; a week before that meeting the judge released the youth from probation and rescinded the order for juvenile justice conferencing.

The judge felt that the family had been a great support to the youth; the youth had endured a lot and was showing great progress in moving forward, including participation in a state level athletic competition. We believe that the time we spent with the family was a contributing factor to the progress the youth and family made in moving forward, even though the entire VOC process was not completed. The opportunity they had to share concerns that they didn't feel comfortable sharing with friends or family, and hearing the perspective of

impartial and non-judgmental people about their situation, we believe was of great value to them.

**Case 2** - The first case I helped with, serving as a community surrogate, involved a youth who had vandalized an elderly woman's garage. I was impressed with the process and believed the youth seemed genuinely contrite. He apologized and was writing a letter to the victim, who could not attend due to mobility issues. As the community surrogate, I talked about how frightening even destruction of property can be, and how neighbors can be affected when crime appears to happen in a neighborhood, as has actually happened in mine.

**Case 3** - The most recent case, which another mediator and I put together, involved a 15 year old girl who keyed an older boy's truck, causing about \$800 damage. She realized that what she did was wrong and agreed to make full restitution by working this summer. She talked about ways to handle anger before you do something you would regret. We interviewed the victim also, but used a surrogate at the meeting who was able to talk about his little sister, who was having similar relation / friend problems in high school and how troublesome those can be.

**Case 4** - A student/athlete was drawn into a fight in the cafeteria. He is a freshman and his father reported that he is college football scholarship material, and the boy said he wanted to be a coach. The "victim (very much an offender for his behavior)" did not participate. I recruited a high school girl to take the role of a student affected by violence, and a co-mediator who was involved with college sports as a parent and in his work. The young man did an excellent job during the mediation, especially when relating to the student surrogate. He was especially affected when it was pointed out that because of his athletic training and size that he could really hurt someone in a fight. He took responsibility for his actions. His restitution plan included volunteering to help with a youth football team.

**Case 5** - A 17 year old youth had shoplifted from Walmart, items worth less than \$30. He was very nervous about his involvement with the law because he had been in an out of home placement when he was younger at a group home in another town and was afraid that he would be taken away from his family. A representative from Walmart was present, and I was concerned about how he would interact with the youth. He turned out to have had a previous career with corrections, and was able to give the boy tips about how to be proactive with his probation officer. The youth got upset when the Walmart representative talked about him writing letters in the reparations portion of the mediation. He had told me that he had difficulty with writing in our private session, and I told him that he could tailor his reparations to fit his needs. We calmed him and got him to think about alternatives. They ended up with verbal apologies to various people at Walmart that were affected by this shoplifting, facilitated by the representative in the mediation, as well as volunteering to work at a bicycle repair shop that gave bikes to needy children. He was very proud of himself in the mediation as evidenced by his final remarks.

## Appendix B

### Sustainability Assessment - Summary

1. **Communications: 4.3 average overall: Concord 3.4 average; Mediation West 4.0 ave.; ODR 4.2 ave.; The Mediation Center 5.6 ave.**

Strategic communication with stakeholders and the public about your program

	To little or no extent			To a very great extent				Not able to answer
1. The program has communication strategies to secure and maintain public support.	1	2	<u>3Con</u> <u>ODR</u>	4	5	6	7	NA
2. Program staff communicates the need for the program to the public.	1	2	<u>3MW</u> <u>ODR</u>	<u>4Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
3. The program is marketed in a way that generates interest.	1	2	3	<u>4Con</u> <u>MW</u> <u>TMC</u>	5	6	7	NA
4. The program increases community awareness of the issue.	1	2	<u>3Con</u> <u>ODR</u>	<u>4MW</u>	5	6	7	NA
5. The program demonstrates its value to the public.	1	2	<u>3Con</u> <u>ODR</u>	<u>4MW</u>	5	6	7	NA

2. **Partnerships: 4.5 average overall**

**Mediation West 3.0 average; Concord 4.0 average; ODR 4.7 average  
The Mediation Center 6.2 average**

Cultivating connections between your program and its stakeholders

	To little or no extent			To a very great extent				Not able to
1. Diverse community organizations are invested in the success of the program.	1	<u>2MW</u>	3	<u>4Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
2. The program communicates with community leaders.	1	<u>2MW</u>	3	<u>4ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
3. Community leaders are involved with the program.	1	<u>2MW</u>	3	<u>4Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
4. Community members are passionately committed to the program.	1	2	3	<u>4Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
5. The community is engaged in the development of program goals.	1	2	<u>3MW</u> <u>Con</u>	<u>4ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA

**3. Funding Stability: 4.7 average overall**  
**Mediation West 3.0 average; ODR 4.2 average;**  
**Concord 5.4 average; The Mediation Center 5.8 average**

Establishing a consistent financial base for your program

	To little or no extent				To a very great extent			Not able to answer
1. The program exists in a supportive state economic climate.	1	2	3 <u>MW</u>	4 <u>ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
2. The program implements policies to help ensure sustained funding.	1	2	3	4 <u>ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
3. The program is funded through a variety of sources.	1 <u>MW</u>	2	3	4 <u>ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
4. The program has a combination of stable and flexible funding.	1	2	3	4 <u>ODR</u> <u>MW</u>	5	6	7	NA
5. The program has sustained funding.	1	2 <u>MW</u>	3	4 <u>ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA

**4. Strategic Planning: 4.7 average overall**  
**Mediation West 3.6 average; Concord 4.2 average;**  
**ODR 4.7 average; The Mediation Center 6.0 average**

Using processes that guide your program’s direction, goals, and strategies

	To little or no extent				To a very great extent			Not able to answer
1. The program plans for future resource needs.	1	2	3 <u>MW</u>	4 <u>Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
2. The program has a long-term financial plan.	1	2 <u>MW</u>	3	4 <u>ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
3. The program has a sustainability plan.	1	2	3 <u>MW</u>	4 <u>ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
4. The program’s goals are understood by all stakeholders.	1	2	3 <u>MW</u>	4 <u>Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
5. The program clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.	1	2	3 <u>Con</u>	4	5	6	7	NA

**5. Political Support: 4.9 average overall**  
**Mediation West 3.8 average; Concord 4.6 average**  
**ODR 5.0 average; The Mediation Center 6.4 average**

Internal and external political environments that support your program

	To little or no extent				To a very great extent			Not able to answer
1. Political champions advocate for the program.	1	2	<u>3MWC</u> <u>onc</u>	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program has strong champions with the ability to garner resources.	1	2	<u>3MW</u>	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program has political support within the larger organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program has political support from outside of the organization.	1	<u>2MW</u>	3	<u>4ODR</u>	5	6	7	NA
5. The program has strong advocacy support.	1	2	3	<u>4Con</u> <u>MW</u>	5	6	7	NA

**6. Program Evaluation: 5.3 Average overall: The Mediation Center 4.8 ave.;**  
**Concord 5.0 average; ODR 5.1 average; Mediation West 6.2 average**

Assessing your program to inform planning and document results

	To little or no extent				To a very great extent			Not able to answer
1. The program has the capacity for quality program evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program reports short term and intermediate outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. Evaluation results inform program planning and implementation.	1	2	3	<u>4Con</u> <u>TMC</u>	5	6	7	NA
4. Program evaluation results are used to demonstrate successes to funders and other key stakeholders.	1	2	<u>3TMC</u>	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program provides strong evidence to the public that the program works.	1	2	3	<u>4Con</u>	5	6	7	NA

**7. Organizational Capacity: 5.4 average overall; The Med. Center 5.0 ave.; ODR 5.1 average; Mediation West 5.5 average; Concord 6.0 average.**

Having the internal support and resources needed to effectively manage programs.

	To little or no extent				To a very great extent			Not able to
1. The program is well integrated into the operations of the organization.	1	2	3	<u>4TMC</u>	5	6	7	NA
2. Organizational systems are in place, including data systems and written protocols, to support the various program needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. Leadership effectively articulates the vision of the program to external partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. Leadership efficiently manages staff and other resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program has adequate staff to complete the program's goals.	<u>1 MW</u>	<u>2ODR</u>	<u>3TMC</u>	4	5	6	7	NA
6. Leadership is grounded in restorative justice experientially.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

**8. Program Adaptation: 5.9 average overall: ODR 5.2 ave.; Concord 5.5 ave.; The Mediation Center 6.0 average; Mediation West 7.0 average**

Taking actions that adapt your program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness

	To little or no extent				To a very great extent			Not able to
1. The program periodically reviews the evidence base.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program adapts strategies and is flexible with multi-method approaches as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program adapts to new science.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program proactively adapts to changes in the environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program makes decisions about which components are ineffective and should not continue.	1	2	3	<u>4Con</u>	5	6	7	NA
6. The program recognizes unintended consequences and adapts as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# School of Social Work



## **U of MN Mission Statement**

The University of Minnesota, founded in the belief that all people are enriched by understanding, is dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth; to the sharing of this knowledge through education for a diverse community; and to the application of this knowledge to benefit the people of the state, the nation and the world. The University's threefold mission of research and discovery, teaching and learning, and outreach and public service is carried out on multiple campuses and throughout the state.

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