



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Dispute Resolution Program Celebrates 25 Years of Service

LANSING, MI, October 15, 2015 – As Michiganders mark National Conflict Resolution Day, the Michigan Supreme Court is commending an initiative that has helped resolve conflicts around Michigan for a quarter century. During the month of October, the MSC’s Office of Dispute Resolution is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP) – 18 local centers statewide that provide mediation and dispute resolution services to more than 30,000 Michigan residents each year.

“Providing access to mediation gives the public an efficient, low-cost option to resolve disputes,” said Doug Van Epps, the Office of Dispute Resolution director who has overseen the CDRP since it began. “Local mediation centers can take small claims disputes and solve them efficiently without involving the justice system.”

Van Epps went on to note how the program’s cases have become increasingly more challenging: “At their inception, the centers mediated chiefly small claims and landlord/tenant cases, but over time, they have gone beyond resolving claims over money and property, and developed expertise in working on disputes involving relationships. None of this work would be possible without the invaluable contributions of the mediators who contribute their time to help fellow citizens resolve their most intractable issues.”

According to its 2014 annual report, mediation experts at local centers disposed of 14,725 cases that were initially headed toward the court system. Also, in 74 percent of cases, the parties reached a concrete agreement with the assistance of their neutral mediator. Eight out of ten instances of resolution handled through the CDRP saw long-term success and were able to keep their decided-upon compromise.

The CDRP, which was established in October 1990, was recently honored as a finalist in the Michigan Governor’s Service Awards, recognizing the program as among the best of the state’s most successful volunteer programs.

The program typically addresses cases involving small and civil claims, custody and divorce cases, real estate, or school disputes. For more information, visit www.courts.mi.gov/disputeresolution.

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