



May 5, 2021

Oregon State Legislature  
Education Subcommittee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-chairs Frederick and McLain and committee members,

I write to request that you please fund Dispute Resolution in the State Programs at Universities section of the budget at no less than \$2.93 million dollars to invest in statewide community dispute resolution through UO's Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution (OOCDR) and public policy facilitation at PSU's Oregon Consensus (OC). The state investment leverages a cadre of 650+ volunteer mediators who provide \$800,000+ in volunteer services to contribute to more than 12,000 reduced and free mediations each biennium. These funds increase vulnerable community members' access to justice, increase housing stability, decrease youth recidivism rates, and reduce court costs. The state pays to provide mediation services ranging from landlord/tenant, foreclosure avoidance, restorative justice in schools, to neighbor to neighbor and provides conflict resolution training to private parties through direct grants that support 15 community programs across 24 Oregon counties.

In addition to the base funding, I ask that you support restoring \$349,000 of funding that was cut at the close of the 2019 session. This funding was restored in -6 amendments to HB 5204 adopted by the Ways and Means Committee on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020. Due to the manner in which the 2020 legislative session concluded, the funding was ultimately not restored because the bill did not make it to the Governor's desk. We ask the committee to support restoring this critical funding for dispute resolution programs across the state. The pandemic has stretched dispute resolution programs to a breaking point. Like everyone, we're being asked to do more with less. Restoration of this funding will allow the network of community programs to provide service in underserved areas of the state.

Community dispute resolution programs provide vital service to vulnerable community members, particularly in landlord/tenant cases. Compared to eviction cases in the court room, mediation balances power better between parties, allows for parties to negotiate financial plans, and is more likely to improve the relationship between the parties. An investment in mediation is a decimal fraction to the downstream costs paid by

**Mediation participants report:**

**91%**

Felt respected by staff in consideration of their age, race, gender and other identities

**68%**

Felt less stress about the conflict

**97%**

Felt service is valuable

**76%**

Resolved the case

**Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution**

1515 Agate St. Eugene, OR. 97403  
541-346-1623 | [uoregon.edu](http://uoregon.edu)



social services after an eviction according to the Cost of Eviction February 2021 study by PSU's Homeless Research and Action Collaborative. Below is an example of a recent mediation case in southern Oregon:

A newly single mom with two children was back before the court facing eviction for not paying the rent on her mobile home space. The landlord's agent had previously engaged in mediation with this tenant only to have the rent not paid again. The agent wished to decline mediation this time and proceed to eviction, but the judge encouraged the agent to "at least try." As the mediation began, the tenant explained that her spouse had left their marriage shortly after the previous mediation had taken place. Then a child became ill and she lost her job because she was unable to secure childcare. The tenant acknowledged the late rent issue and thanked the landlord for allowing her to add a roommate to the lease to help out. Upon hearing the full story, the landlord's agent softened and stated that she had been raised by a single parent and had no desire to put children out on the street.

This mediation took less than an hour. A single parent and kids kept their home. A landlord received full payment for back rent. All walked away relieved and satisfied. The mediators helped prevent catastrophe for a mom and financial loss for a landlord.

Please advocate with legislative leadership to include full funding for Dispute Resolution, including the \$349,000 of restoration funding for the Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolution (OOCDR), in legislative packages that are considered in this session.

Thank you for your support and service in the legislature.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick Sponsler".

Patrick Sponsler, MPA  
[sponsler@uoregon.edu](mailto:sponsler@uoregon.edu)  
OOCDR Administrator



UNIVERSITY OF  
OREGON

School of Law

# The Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution

*Community Dispute Resolution Centers help create **safer communities**, contribute to **school success**, increase **housing security**, and improve **access to justice**.*



## 2017-2019 Biennial Report

# SCHOOL SUCCESS

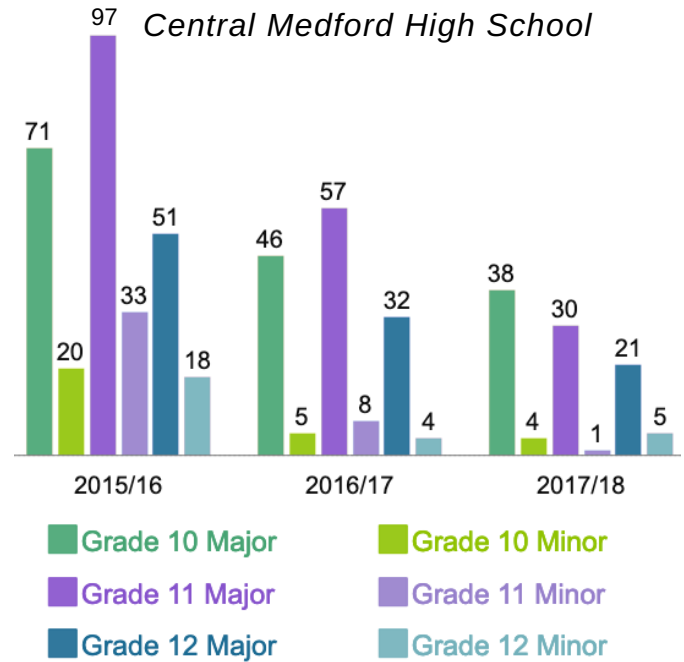
## MAKING IT RIGHT WITH RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Resolve Center for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice piloted an accountability class, coined "Making It Right," for North Medford High School students during the 2018/19 academic year. The class is a promising alternative to the traditional suspension model, allowing students to be both accountable and remain in their school community. "Making It Right" supports restoring relationships, helps manage suspension rates, and prevents some cases from entering the justice system altogether.



## Behavior Referrals

Central Medford High School



## BEHAVIOR REFERRALS WAY DOWN

Since 2015, behavior referrals have been significantly reduced at Central Medford High School. Principal Amy Herbst attributes the improvement to Central Medford High School's implementation of Restorative Justice Practices in partnership with Resolve for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice.

# SAFER COMMUNITIES

## SKILLED NEIGHBORS THROUGH COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Dispute Resolution Centers help community members develop lifelong skills through low or no-cost conflict resolution trainings. A recent participant at Beaverton's Center for Mediation and Dialogue remarked:

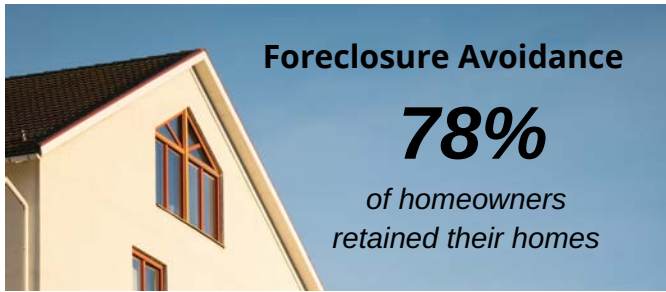
*"I came to this class feeling overwhelmed and depressed and am leaving feeling I have the tools to sustain my hope. The tools are immediately helpful, and I am grateful I am on an upward bound."*

**80%** of youth participants did not re-offend

*A 10-year collaborative study by Resolve, Southern Oregon University, and Jackson County Juvenile Services comparing Restorative Justice Practices and traditional practices*

## REDUCED YOUTH RECIDIVISM WITH RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice focuses on balanced support and meaningful outcomes for youth offenders, crime victims, and the community through mediation and conversation. Youth offenders are held accountable, victims are empowered, and communities are engaged both as stakeholders and as advocates.



# HOUSING SECURITY

## MEDIATORS STABILIZE CRISIS

The Oregon Foreclosure Avoidance Program connects at-risk homeowners and lenders with facilitators to help Oregonians avoid foreclosure. A recent case:

*A family with children fell behind on payments during divorce proceedings. The parent living in the home was not on the mortgage or aware of the pending foreclosure. Through the Foreclosure Avoidance Program, the parent remaining in the home had the opportunity to transfer the mortgage to their name and resume payments. The process provided time and a creative solution which stabilized housing for the family and brought the loan into good standing for the bank.*

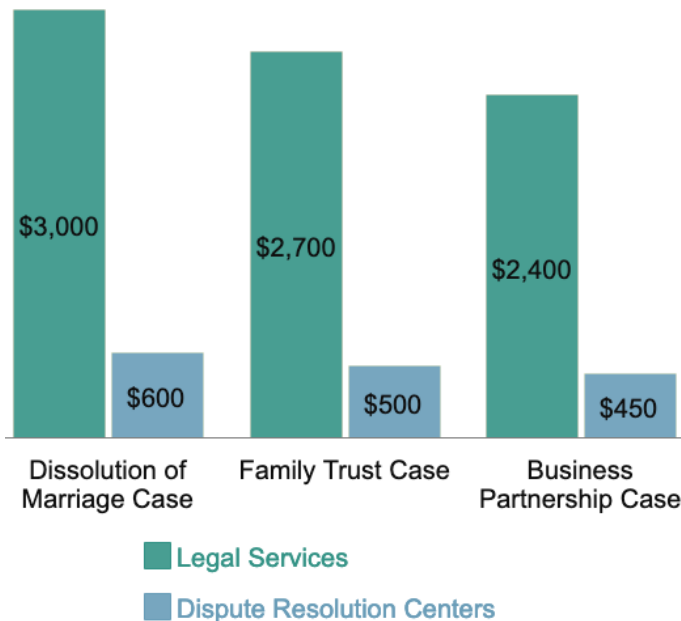
## MENDING MANUFACTURED COMMUNITIES

In a decades-long collaboration with Oregon Housing and Community Services, Dispute Resolution Centers continue to foster positive individual and group dynamics in manufactured housing communities through constructive communication workshops and mediation. Over the past 10 years, 83% of disputes were resolved with an agreement.



## Contrast in Costs

10 Hours of Legal & Community Dispute Resolution Services



# ACCESS TO JUSTICE

## ELIMINATING FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Dispute Resolution Centers enable all community members to access services that are equally effective yet lower in cost than traditional legal services. Dispute Resolution Centers offer a sliding scale fee structure that reduces or waives mediation fees based on each community member's ability to pay. In Deschutes County alone, **Community Solutions of Central Oregon saved 90+ community members a minimum of \$135,000** in associated legal fees for divorce, business, or parenting-related disputes.



*The Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution advances State investment in healthy communities by promoting dialogue, learning, and growth towards a connected human community.*

## Oregon Community Dispute Resolution Centers

**15**  
Community Dispute Resolution Centers

**55,473**  
Community Members Served

**13,963**  
Cases

**651**  
Volunteers

**27,101**  
Volunteer Hours

**535**  
Community Education Programs

**505**  
Youth Education Programs

**20,119**  
Education Program Participants

### METRO, NORTH COAST, & MID-VALLEY

#### Center for Mediation & Dialogue

Washington County  
503-526-2523 | beavertonoregon.gov/cmd

#### Community Mediation Services

Polk County  
503-623-3111 | vorpcms.org

#### East Metro Mediation

Multnomah County  
503-618-3247 | greshamoregon.gov/East-Metro-Mediation

#### Hillsboro Mediation Program

Washington County  
503-615-6651 | hillsboro-oregon.gov/mediation

#### Resolutions Northwest

Multnomah County  
503-595-4890 ext 101 | resolutionsnorthwest.org

#### Resolution Services

Clackamas County  
503-655-8700 | clackamas.us/ccrs

#### Your Community Mediation

Tillamook & Yamhill Counties  
503-435-2835 | ycmediation.org

### CENTRAL & NORTH CENTRAL

#### Community Solutions of Central Oregon

Crook, Deschutes, & Jefferson Counties  
541-383-0187 | solutionsco.org

#### Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center

Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, & Wheeler Counties  
541-386-1283 | 6rivers.org

### NORTHEAST

#### Eastern Oregon Mediation Center

Union County  
541-786-0270 | eomediation.org

### MID & SOUTH COAST

#### Common Ground Mediation

Coos & Douglas Counties  
541-751-9666 (Coos)  
541-530-2578 (Douglas)  
commongroundmediation.org

#### Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution

Lincoln County  
541-574-9846

### SOUTHWEST

#### Resolve Center for Dispute Resolution & Restorative Justice

Jackson & Josephine Counties  
541-770-2468 | resolvecenter.org

### SOUTH VALLEY

#### Center for Dialogue & Resolution

Lane County  
541-344-5366 | lanecdr.org

#### Neighbor to Neighbor

Benton, Linn, & Marion Counties  
503-585-0651 (Marion)  
541-223-4189 (Benton/Linn)  
n2nmediation.org

### Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution

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Community Dispute Resolution Centers are sanctioned under the Oregon Revised Statutes, Chapter 36.

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