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**STATE OF MINNESOTA
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Legislative Report
Third Judicial District
Alternative Dispute Resolution Program
January 31, 2003**

The Third Judicial District was allotted funding by legislative enactment in 2001 to develop and operate Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) programs. The funding for ADR provided funding over two years and required a 2-1 local match to run the community mediation program. Mr. Eduardo Wolle of Northfield directed the programming.

This document will serve as a joint report of the results of the ADR programs developed and operated under section 18, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 494.

Initial Program Development. The broad base of funding allowed the Third District to coordinate a program was operated primarily in Rice County through the efforts of Mr. Eduardo Wolle. Mr. Wolle provided the basis to find, train and nurture select 'volunteers' to maintain a program designed at mediating issues of conflict. The Rice County Dispute Resolution Program eventually utilized over a dozen trained mediators or qualified neutrals to address disputes in Conciliation Court, Unlawful Detainers and select Family Law proceedings. Mr. Wolle intended to develop the program further to address the issues present in harassment cases and other 'back yard' dispute matters.

The satisfaction of the programming in Rice County clearly supported the endeavor. The program received high marks from the judges, from lawyers and from the participants. Due to ADR, the judicial branch recognized a slight reduction in case load, thus allowing judges to spend time on matters of critical concern.

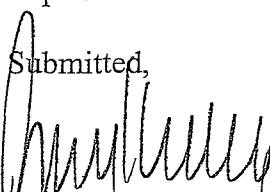
Additionally, in broader application, the use of ADR benefited other judges in our District. The weighted caseload figures of our District routinely report that we are under-judged. Because our present judge group of 23 is located in 11 separate counties we are required to operate under our own internal equalization plan. Thus, the three judges chambered in Rice County are dutifully obligated to assist other judges in our district—primarily Mower County. The developed programming of ADR in Rice County allows us to use our judicial resources wisely—allowing Rice County judges to assist neighboring counties in these times of need.


Attempts to Expand Program Development. Because of the success in Rice County a concentrated effort was made through Mr. Wolle's efforts to expand the program benefits of ADR through out the district. Contacts and meetings were held in both Waseca and Steele Counties. Judge supported the ADR concept. Lawyers in each of the counties were also receptive to development of the program. Unfortunately, however, the insurmountable obstacle of further development was and is the required county buy-in, i.e. county match funding. Every county in Minnesota is operating under a need based shut-down-of-ancillary-operations system. Accordingly, there is an inability to convince county boards and city councils to include ADR planning in their already tight or non-existent budgets. The program beneficiaries—Waseca and Steele Counties—even attempted to develop and implement a shared contribution of services arrangement where each county would pay a smaller amount toward joint services. Likewise, the plight of the state and local budgets thwarted any ability to move the ADR concept forward.

Challenges. The greatest challenges of development and implementation of the program is purely budget based. Although in a long-term scenario, the ADR concept would 'pay off' there is a present inability to expand any services that require match of funds or a contribution of funds.

In Conclusion, the judicial branch of the Third District has clearly benefited from this grant funding. We are available for any further reports or information as may be requested.

Submitted,


Renee Worke
Chief Judge
Third Judicial District


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District Administrator
Third Judicial District