

New York State Dispute Resolution Association, Inc.

Overview of Achievements, 2015-2016

The New York State Dispute Resolution Association (NYSdra) provides support to, and administers dispute resolution programs in partnership with, twenty-one Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRCs) across New York State. These CDRCs serve their community populations with various services at low or no cost to the consumer. Many of these services are utilized by low-income New Yorkers.

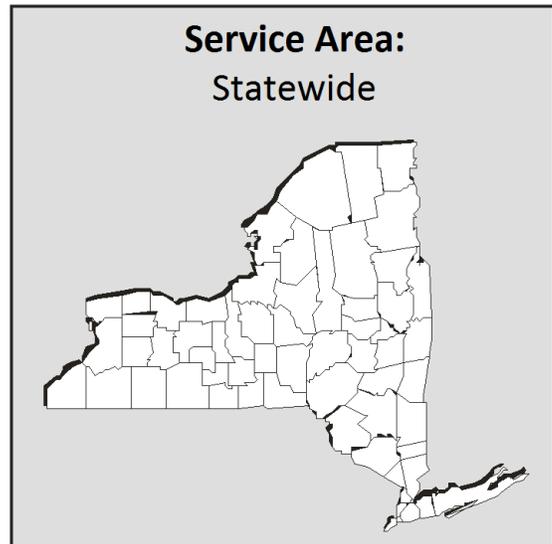
In 2015-2016, CDRCs handled a total of 28,673 cases and served 69,229 individuals. The most prominent age group served by CDRCs is 30-39. Approximately 15% of those served receive public assistance and over 4% are unemployed. Of those who reported their income to their CDRC, about 51% earn \$45,000 or less per year and 9% earn less than \$9,000 per year. Half of those served by CDRCs have a high school education or less. It is clear the CDRC network is crucial to providing access to justice to those underserved in New York State.

NYSdra provides technical support and advocacy which is directly funded by the IOLA grant, and which helps the CDRCs to maintain their current levels of service, despite recent budget cuts. Participation in NYSDRA contract programs (e.g.; Special Education Mediation, Lemon Law Arbitration, and Agricultural Mediation) allows CDRCs to improve the administration of justice by offering local dispute resolution services which are collaborative, accessible, and less expensive than litigation or other alternatives. Cost savings are considerable; for example, one school district was able to save an estimated \$60,000 per year by utilizing Special Education mediation rather than the Impartial Hearing process.

It is extremely difficult to calculate cost savings of dispute resolution because there is little to no data on the cost of court cases. However, a conservative estimate of the cost of a court case or administrative process is \$500. Therefore, the 28,673 cases that were mediated through Community Dispute Resolution Centers in New York State between April 1, 2015 and March 31, 2016 saved taxpayers \$14,336,500.

IOLA funding is also being used to support the establishment and expansion of school-based programs applying restorative practices to address juvenile justice issues. These programs, supported by the development of written materials and resources for sharing, will be replicated by CDRCs throughout the state. Structured ongoing contact between grantees and other interested CDRCs is being facilitated by NYSDRA.

NYSdra did not encounter any significant obstacles during the program year. Our sub-grantees encountered logistical and communication obstacles while initiating their funded projects such as difficulty scheduling stakeholder meetings and lead-time needed to provide outreach and information to interested parties. Overall, these obstacles were dealt with using communication and explanation tools resulting in successful launches of all projects.



This Provider At a Glance

Population Served: Community Dispute Resolution Centers

Area Served: Statewide

Total Funding: \$990,337

Total IOLA Grant: \$72,183

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents

Total Staff: 1.00

Lawyers: 0.50

Other Staff: 0.50

Types of Services Provided

Direct Civil Legal Representation

Brief Services

Extended Services

Hotlines and Other Phone-Based Services

Technology and Other Innovations

Community Legal Education

Pro Se Assistance

Collaborations With Other Service Providers

Major Cases or Other Advocacy Projects



Other Services

Technology and Other Innovations

NYSDRA uses a combination of technology to provide outreach and services to low-income New Yorkers. Through Facebook, LinkedIn, and the NYSDRA website, members and CDRC representatives contacted their representatives, asking them to ensure funding was not cut. NYSDRA uses a web-based database to collect and maintain information on our constituents. In 2014, we are transitioned to a new website and database system called YourMembership.com which has allowed us to be even more effective in engaging the public and our members. This program is also our means for communicating with our over 1,700 eNews subscribers. Six editions of the NYSDRA eNews were delivered April 2015-March 2016.

Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

Community Legal Education: NYSDRA and our CDRCs conducted various community legal education programs in 2015-2016. For example, the New York State Agricultural Mediation Program (NYSAMP) reached over 5,100 individuals through community legal education. Not reported in Part Two of this report would be those reached by NYSAMP's also regular presence in rural communities through two weeks of ads every month in ATTICUS online news with a readership of 40,000 per month and ads twice a month in "Country Folks" magazine with 17,000 readers weekly. Bimonthly ads in a commodity magazine reach 600 readers and assorted local press releases, newsletter contributions to partner organizations and radio guest spots also promoted mediation services. We estimate NYSAMP, itself, has distributed close to 10,000 documents containing legal education. In addition, NYSDRA and has distributes over 10,000 brochures containing legal education.

NYSDRA and the CDRCs conduct regular community education sessions reaching populations underserved by other agencies, including access to justice. Topics for these programs range from Special Education Mediation, Community Counseling, interagency relationship building, and youth initiatives. Including those associated with our NYSAMP program, we have provided education through presentations to over 10,000 individuals.

Website visits to the NYSDRA and various CDRC sites account for much of the Community Legal Education we provide as a network. We estimate a total of 100,000 unique visitors to these sites per year.

Pro se assistance: The majority of the matters handled through mediation at CDRCs occur without the presence of an attorney during the mediation session. Statewide, the CDRCs provided services for 28,673 cases and served 69,229 individuals in 2015-2016; the majority of those cases were court referrals. Clients are encouraged to consult with attorneys when legal matters are involved, or for review of custody or separation agreements reached in mediation. Educational information, including resources

for legal information, is provided as needed during intake. Written materials are offered to clients to help them prepare to participate effectively during their mediation or arbitration sessions.

Referrals: CDRCs often refer cases that are inappropriate for mediation to other agencies. Referrals are made to domestic violence services if there is a history of violence or concerns arise during screening or mediation; to Legal Aid if a legal matter requiring representation is involved; to a County Office such as Child Protective Services or Department of Social Services if there is an administrative oversight issue. Some of these referrals are handled informally while others involve a more structured and collaborative referral mechanism developed with an existing partner. Statewide, CDRCs made an estimated 4,000 referrals in 2015-2016.

Collaborations With Other Service Providers

NYSDRA collaborates with twenty-one Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRCs) in New York State. These CDRCs are NYSDRA members and serve all 62 counties, providing case management and direct services by trained and experienced staff and neutrals. ADR services include mediation, arbitration and conciliation in cases referred from various civil and criminal courts, local and state agencies, and other referral sources. NYSDRA provides regional and statewide outreach, and coordinates and provides technical support for local outreach. NYSDRA collaborates closely with the CDRC network and partners to provide opportunities for capacity building, facilitate exchange of pertinent information and resources, and to educate the public, government agencies and other service providers about the important community resources provided by the CDRC network. NYSDRA has been able to provide additional support this past year by adding a second day to our annual conference that was devoted to CDRC staff professional development. That day-long meeting was used to identify shared needs and priorities, and to organize several groups of volunteers to address those needs.

NYSDRA Board members and staff have formed a collaborative relationship with the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) to offer training and coaching on collaborative governance and consensus building negotiation skills to county legislators. A workshop was provided at the annual NYSAC conference

Number of People Benefited by Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation...

Total:	199,229 People
Community Legal Education and Pro Se Assistance:	99,229 People
Web Usage:	100,000 People

Other Services, *continued*

in February, and additional workshops have been requested for NYSAC conferences in other parts of the state. The Orange County Legislature has contracted with NYSDRA and the Dispute Resolution Center in Orange County to provide extensive training and coaching services for their legislators.

NYSDRA staff also focuses on collaborative efforts to ensure public awareness of specialized ADR services. For example, NYS Agricultural Mediation Program staff work with the USDA agencies, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, American Farmland Trust and other agricultural organizations to ensure that local mediation centers develop connections and develop capacity to meet the needs of their agricultural communities. NYSDRA's Director of Program Operations works with New York State Education Department-funded Parent Centers to coordinate outreach to parents and schools on the benefits of Special Education Mediation.

NYSDRA works in close collaboration with the NYS Unified Court System, Office of ADR & Court Improvement (ADRCIP), as well. This agency oversees the CDRC Program and is instrumental in their success, and in turn, NYSDRA's success. Certain activities are not appropriate for ADRCIP to participate in on behalf of the CDRCs and NYSDRA is able to provide such benefits. ADRCIP collaborates directly with NYSDRA in administering the NYS Agricultural Mediation Program. For this grant period, a representative from ADRCIP worked on the panel deciding which CDRCs would receive IOLA sub-grant funds. This representative has access to statewide service statistics and special knowledge of CDRC capabilities and strengths.

NYSDRA collaborates with various other organizations related to our mission. We share reciprocal membership with the New York State Council on Divorce Mediation, and we participate in state-wide and local events sponsored by other dispute resolution organizations. We also have Board and general members in common with chapters of the Association for Conflict Resolution and the American Arbitration Association.

In the past, NYSDRA has met annually with legal service providers in Unit 4. These annual meetings provide an excellent opportunity to share information about our projects and programs. The possibility of duplicating efforts is not a concern due to the unique nature of the services NYSDRA and our CDRCs provide and, therefore, this meeting was not attended this year. However, our intention is to build on earlier relationships with other programs in Unit 4 and to attend future meetings.

***Pro Bono* Volunteer Involvement**

The vast majority of cases handled by CDRCs are mediated by volunteers trained by ADRCIP certified basic mediation trainers. There are over 1,200 trained volunteer mediators working throughout the CDRC Programs. Over 200 volunteers, including law students and attorneys, attended advanced training provided for neutrals who serve on the neutral panels in specialized programs administered by NYSDRA.

NYSDRA is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of fifteen volunteers who bring legal, mediation and business acumen to their positions on the board, as well as a passion for the mission of NYSDRA. The Board is diverse in gender, age, race and geographic location, representing all sectors of the state population. All members of the Board are active in the communities in which they live.

Sources of Funding

Total	\$990,337
IOLA Grant	\$72,183
State Funding	\$813,995
City and County Funding	\$35,110
Other	\$69,049

