

Fulton County Courts Office of Dispute Resolution

Annual Report for 2015

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The Fulton County ADR Program

The Fulton County ADR Program is a unified system that operates under the statutory scheme set out in OCGA 15-23-1 *et seq.* and serves all five of the Fulton County Courts. The purpose of the program is to offer those in litigation ADR choices that are less formal than a trial and offer a greater level of self-determination in the outcome. These processes typically allow for early disposition of cases without having to go through the rigors of a full trial, saving the parties significant expense, emotional distress, and conserving valuable judicial resources.

The Mission

The Program's mission is two-fold: 1) Provide effective ADR processes to all of the Fulton County Courts, and

2) Educate the bench, the bar, and the public about ADR.

The Work

In 2015, the ADR Program was fully engaged in both prongs of its mission and set high water marks in total cases settled, customer satisfaction rates, and educational offerings.

EFFECTIVE ADR PROCESSES

The Fulton County ADR Programs scheduled 9,371 court cases. Of those, 1,425 resolved prior to the scheduled session, 7,946 completed the ADR process, and 5,935 cases settled through ADR. The overall settlement rate was 75%. The chart below shows the specific details of each ADR program.

PROGRAM	SCHEDULED	COMPLETED	SETTLED	%
FAMILY DIVISION	1,850	1546	1079	70%
SUPERIOR	307	186	87	47%
STATE	119	83	33	40%
LANDLORD/TENANT	4,466	3,916	3,206	82%
JUVENILE	310	248	196	79%
MAGISTRATE	2,139	1,813	1240	68%
PROBATE	68	63	36	57%
JHSC	100	89	57	64%
ARBITRATION	3	1	1	100%
TOTALS	9,371	7,946	5,935	75%

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Approximately 2,500 parties and attorneys filled out detailed customer satisfaction surveys. We read every one and followed up where needed. The overall customer satisfaction rating was 97% for the ADR processes and 99% for the neutrals.

Participants were also given the opportunity to make open ended comments on their experience. Attorneys and parties alike frequently commented on how impressed they were with the quality and professionalism of the services offered - especially the comfortable, welcoming and non-adversarial environment.

The coffee in the ADR office was also rated very highly.

EDUCATION

The ADR Office hosted a 3 hour continuing education seminar that was attended by 25 mediators, and attorneys. The seminar was titled "Mediating with Pro Se Parties." Faculty included a member of the Georgia Supreme Court's Commission on Alternative Dispute Resolution, an advanced mediation practitioner, and the ADR Director. The event was approved for continuing education credit by the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution.

The ADR Director also presented a 1 hour brown bag continuing education seminar, entitled "Informed Consent and Mediating With Pro Se Parties" to the students of the Conflict Resolution Academy.

Forty One Fulton County Judges, staff, and other court employees completed basic mediation training at the Justice Center of Atlanta.

The plans for establishing a mediation clinic through the GSU law school are moving forward very nicely with Bonnie Powell leading the effort.

The ADR website was updated to provide answers to frequently asked questions, access to ADR forms and back issues of our newsletter, and links to other relevant ADR websites, such as the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution. From the website, visitors can also link to ADR statutes, rules, opinions, and other authoritative resources.

Revenues

Revenues in 2015 exceeded expenses for the second straight year.

Conclusion

In 2015, we resolved more cases, educated more people, satisfied more customers, and balanced the budget.

All in all, it was a pretty good year.