

JEFFERSON COUNTY



MEDIATION SERVICES

**PROGRAM REPORT
2008 – 2009**

The JCMS Mission Statement:

To collaborate with government agencies in serving the citizens of Jefferson County by providing effective mediation, communication and negotiation processes, delivered by qualified, dedicated volunteers, in order to foster harmony within the community.

Our Vision:

To provide processes that promote and model peaceful settlement of disputes by offering exemplary, high-quality mediation, negotiation, facilitation, and communication services to the citizens and employees of Jefferson County.

OUR VALUES:

For Clients: to provide a safe forum in which people can be empowered to control decisions affecting their lives.

For Volunteers: to provide continuing education in a mutually beneficial environment.

For Partners (Referring Agencies): to establish and develop a system of collaboration that is dedicated to the mission.

For the Community: to provide a model of effective community interaction to enhance goodwill.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Faye Griffin

District 1

J. Kevin McCasky

District 2

Kathy Hartman

District 3

“Mediation of civil disputes has the potential to save the County some of the huge costs of expanding our court space. We are told that we will need more courtrooms by 2012, at a cost of millions of dollars. We are encouraging the courts to use Mediation Services wherever possible, as this frequently is a quicker and more cost effective way to resolve these issues.”

*Kathy Hartman,
Jefferson County Commissioner*

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Some of the most creative ideas come from people in conflict who remain in conversation with one another, rather than flying into their own corners or staking out entrenched positions. The challenge is to develop structures and processes in which such conflict can be orchestrated productively.”

Ronald Heifetz & Marty Linsky

History and Overview

The Board of County Commissioners approved the creation of Jefferson County Mediation Services (JCMS) in 1993, to make conflict resolution processes available to the citizens and employees of the County. The Sheriff, the District Attorney and the County allocated resources to inaugurate JCMS. In 1994, Mark Loye was hired as Program Director, under direction of the Department of Corrections (now Justice Services). Representatives from various County departments formed an Advisory Group.

Mediations began in March 1994 with 20 volunteer mediators who handled 69 cases that year, referred by 10 agencies. JCMS helped parties in conflict to resolve issues that previously had required the continuing involvement of County law enforcement or regulatory agencies.

Word of the program's value has spread, and the caseload has grown steadily. 37 entities referred 2,813 cases to JCMS in 2008-2009, a 50% increase over the previous two-year total. Any Jefferson County agency, municipality, associated non-profit group, or court can refer parties to mediation. JCMS mediators are available at Small Claims court in the evenings, and seven County Court judges and magistrates now ask us to provide mediators to assist people with protection orders and selected civil cases. District Court judges increasingly require mediation in family cases, particularly in divorce and parenting-time situations, because of the time it saves them. Divorce cases are screened for income, and JCMS accepts the cases of those who cannot afford to pay for mediators. Mediation of parenting-time and child-support cases has helped Child Support Services to increase collections by about 17%, reducing families' need for public assistance, and increasing quality of life for the children.

JCMS now provides mediation, facilitation, arbitration, and training services through the dedication and hard work of about 200 volunteers, who come from a wide variety of educational and experiential backgrounds. Attorneys, social workers, psychologists, educators, human resources professionals, administrators, consultants, entrepreneurs and students all come to this program with a common goal: to provide a safe forum that empowers people to make decisions for themselves.

JCMS has a simple directive: **TO SAVE COUNTY RESOURCES!** County personnel encounter citizen conflicts every day, and often do not have the expertise to resolve them effectively. Referring such conflicts to mediation frees staff to focus on their primary responsibilities. Conserving resources is especially important in recent years due to limited funds, and the resulting need for greater efficiency.

JCMS is fulfilling its mandate in far-reaching and innovative ways (**See Table 1 next page**).

First, JCMS saves additional trips by Sheriff's Deputies and/or Animal Control officers to a particular address by helping the parties to resolve ongoing neighborhood conflicts. If a citation has been issued, JCMS saves costs for the District Attorney's office, as many neighbor disputes can be resolved before trial, allowing the DA to dismiss the case. Court personnel enjoy reduced caseloads and enhanced efficiency. Even if the parties elect not to mediate formally, simply being contacted by our office has motivated many people to resolve conflicts on their own. Many mediated agreements include calling JCMS as a first step if conflict arises again, so mediators can help the parties to modify their agreements as necessary without calling a County agency. These savings are crucial in the County's current tight budget situation.

Second, JCMS saves the cost of lowered productivity among co-workers in conflict. Volunteer mediators have contributed hundreds of hours to help resolve workplace conflict for Jefferson County agencies, many of which are now operating under the stress of fewer personnel and lower budgets.

TABLE 1
Minimum Cost Savings Effected for User Agencies 2008-2009 †

Department	Cases Settled	Cost Per Trip/Case	Trips/Cases Saved Per Settlement *	Cost Savings
Animal Control	28	\$124.00**	2	\$ 6,944.00
County Attorney	1	\$208.01	1	208.01
County Court ††	454	\$120.29	N/A	54,612.00
District Attorney	11	\$162.00	N/A	1,782.00
District Court ††	78	\$406.61	N/A	31,716.00
Juvenile Assessment	3	\$201.95	1	605.85
Planning & Zoning	1	\$188.25	2	376.50
Human Services	214	\$80.00	1	17,120.00
Municipalities	20	\$123.91	2	4,956.40
Sheriff	26	\$141.00	2	7,332.00
Workplace Cases †††	17	\$7175.00	N/A	121,975.00
Total				\$ 247,627.76

*It is difficult at best to determine how many trips by a Sheriff's Deputy, Animal Control officer or Zoning officer are avoided by helping people to reach settlement. Based on feedback from our user agencies, the numbers of trips shown above represent *minimum* savings. Also, the more the agencies use JCMS, the more they save! These figures do not include the **enormous savings for cases that do not need to go to trial** because the disputes have been resolved through mediation.

**This cost does not include the District Attorney's savings due to not taking the case to court.

† Sources available upon request

†† In court cases, mediation saves hours of court time because the parties have already reached agreement, and even in cases that did not settle, the parties have identified and clarified the relevant issues. In divorce and child-custody cases, mediation saves an average of 3-4 hours of courtroom time per case.

††† See Page 10

In addition, 4,435 volunteer hours were donated in 2008, and 4,609 volunteer hours were donated in 2009 (a total of 9,043 hours), realizing a **cost avoidance for the County of an additional \$723,520**. This calculation was made based on a conservative figure of \$80 per hour for mediators. The actual cost to hire a mediator ranges from \$120 (Colorado Office of Dispute Resolution) to \$250 and up per hour.

"Mediation continues to serve as a valuable and cost-saving device in the Animal Control officer's tool chest. We often find that penalties and prosecution do not solve neighborhood animal problems. The Mediation staff invests their time and expertise to get people to put aside anger, discover the real problem, and initiate action to solve it. When problems are truly solved, Animal Control staff is available to address new issues and spend time on proactive and preventative programs. Thanks!"

*Carla Zinanti, Manager
Jefferson County Animal Control*

How the mediation process works:

Conflict arises when people believe that they have incompatible interests, values or needs. Conflict can lead to creative change, but it can become destructive when the parties cannot resolve their differences. Responses to conflict can range from informal discussion to violent confrontation. Mediation allows the participants to make their own decisions while a third party facilitates the process. Mediators do not give opinions or make rulings, and have no stake in the outcome, so the parties can negotiate in a safe setting where all concerns, interests, information and ideas can be heard.

Our mediators contact all the parties, help them to identify issues and clarify their perceptions of the problem, and then develop a general strategy for the mediation session. At the meeting, the mediators establish ground rules that will provide a secure environment for the parties. They work with the parties to define the topics or areas of concern, to defuse antagonism, and to find common ground. They help the parties to brainstorm options for resolving the issue and to evaluate those options. Parties can then reach a mutually-acceptable agreement that will meet their needs. Finally, they can create a formal written agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding, to record their resolution.

Benefits of the process are significant: mediation can be ***scheduled quickly***, and is generally ***less expensive*** and ***less time-consuming*** than going to court. In addition, the parties are generally ***more satisfied*** with the outcomes and, finally, parties generally ***comply better with the terms*** of agreements that they have crafted themselves than they do with terms imposed upon them by someone else.

What our mediation participants say about JCMS:

“I am so grateful. I had a bad feeling about the Jefferson County bureaucracy, but after this, I feel like someone really does want to help.”

“Thank you - your work will help all of us at our agency. You made us feel comfortable.”

“Both mediators helped this situation with the utmost professionalism and respect.”

“I want to express my utmost gratitude. You saved me a lot of emotional wear and tear, and conditions where I rent have improved drastically for me and for a lot of others.”

“The mediators were wonderful – a true blessing. Thank you!”

“I am very grateful for your help, and think all of you do a great job and perform a great service.”

“Mediation Services the way it is in Jefferson County is an invaluable tool for citizens. Denver really needs something like this.”

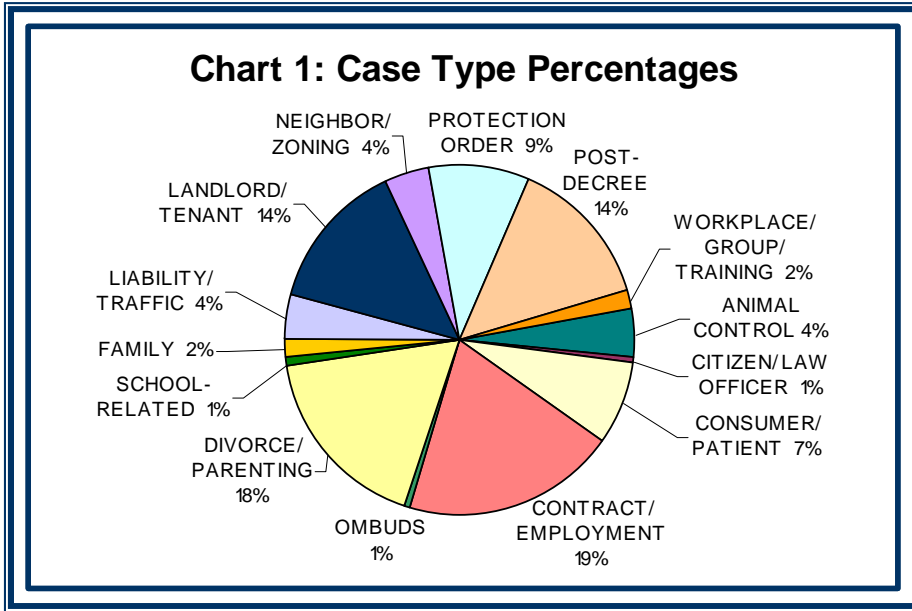
“You did a great job helping me feel comfortable throughout.”

“It was a great pleasure to work with your facilitators. We appreciate their skill and professionalism, and the time and attention given to our event.”

“The mediators did a great job of keeping everyone on track.”

“The mediator was very professional, very fair, and handled the process very well.”

We Handle Many Types of Conflicts

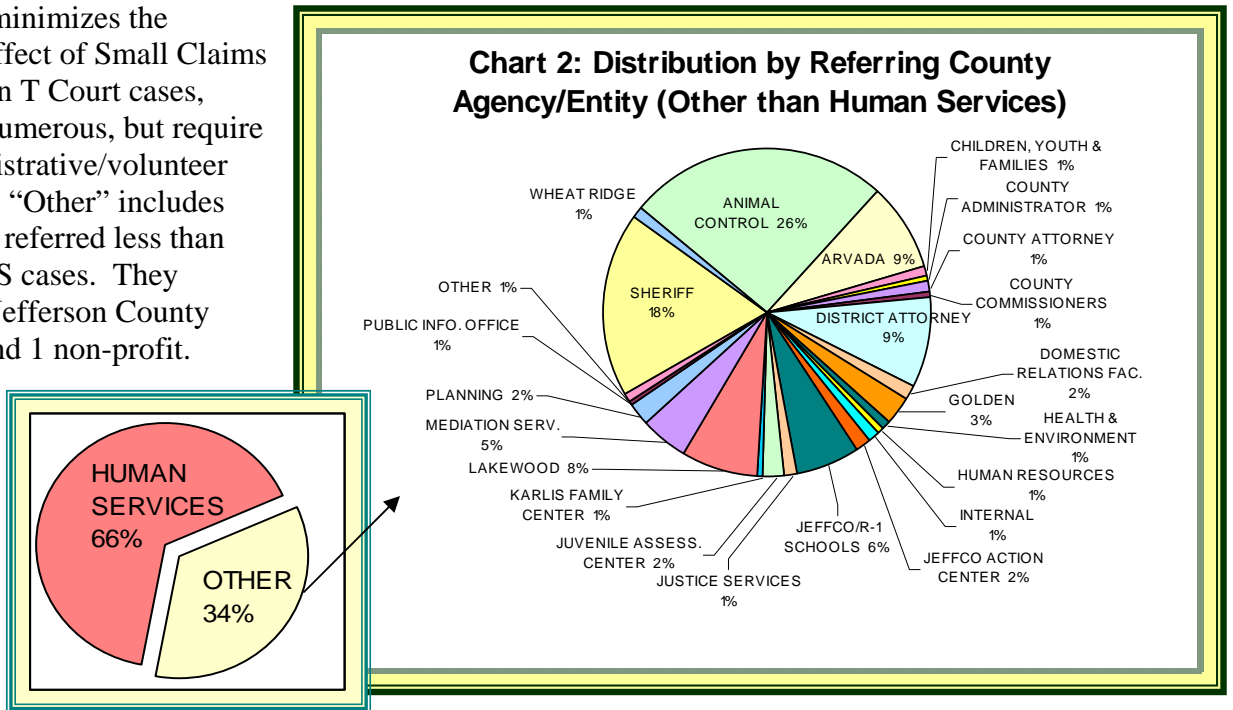


As can be seen in **Chart 1 (left)**, JCMS handles a broad variety of issues. Cases are referred by Jefferson County agencies (e.g., Animal Control, Sheriff’s Office, Planning and Zoning, District Attorney’s office), the Courts (e.g., District, County, and Small Claims), non-profit family service agencies, R-1 Schools, and municipalities in Jefferson County (e.g., Arvada, Golden, Lakewood, and Wheat Ridge). The client list keeps growing as more departments discover that mediation can conserve staff resources *and* serve the public

effectively, and that it provides a peaceful dispute-resolution process for nearly any kind of conflict. Note: case types representing less than 1% of JCMS cases are not shown.

From Many Sources

The two charts below illustrate the sources of JCMS cases among the County agencies, municipalities, and non-profits (**Chart 2, below**), and courts in Jefferson County (**Chart 3, page 8**), during 2008-2009. This separation minimizes the distorting effect of Small Claims and Division T Court cases, which are numerous, but require little administrative/volunteer work. Note: “Other” includes entities that referred less than 1% of JCMS cases. They included 7 Jefferson County Agencies and 1 non-profit.



The number of cases in Small Claims Court and Division T is large, but they must be completed in a very short time, and the parties are poles apart. Even with these limitations, a majority of parties who agree to mediate resolve their disputes. District Court provides a relatively small percentage of court cases (10%), but many of these are divorce, parenting time (child custody) and child support cases,

which take much longer than the average case to complete. Despite their complexity, the number of issues, and the level of emotion involved, the District Court cases that went to mediation usually resulted in agreements or, at least, greater clarification of the issues, which in itself saves a lot of court time. One judge estimates that it saves *at least* a half day of court time when a divorce case is mediated.

And We Get Results

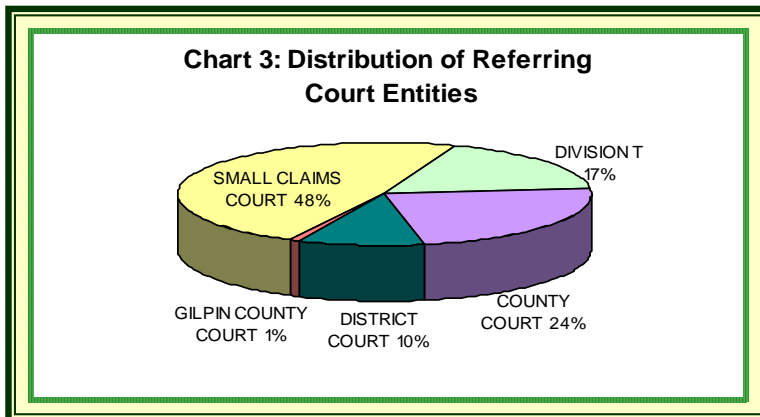
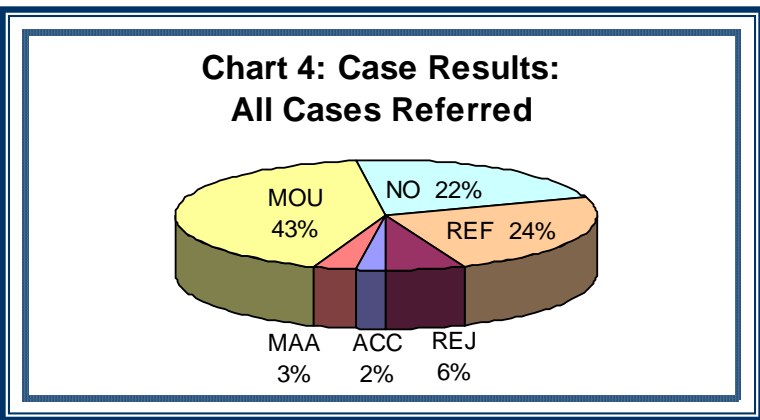
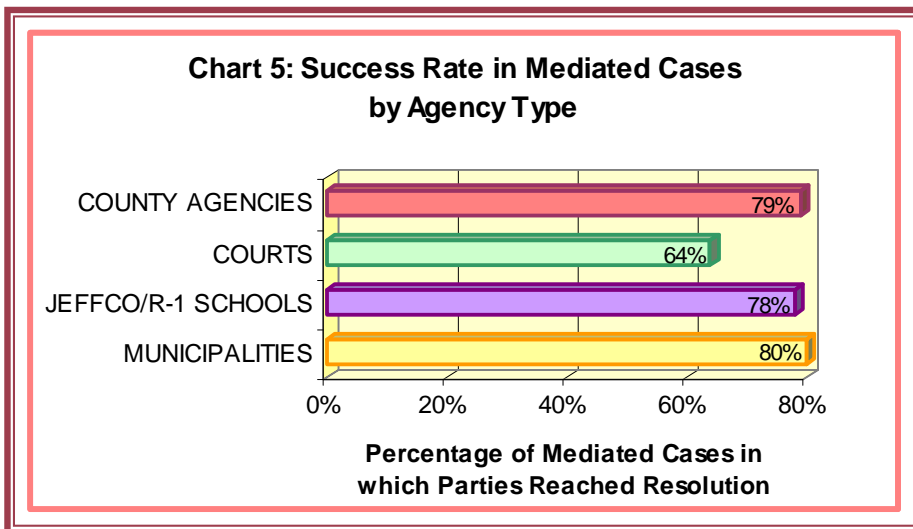


Chart 4 (below) shows the results of **all cases referred** to JCMS. **MOU** refers to a Memorandum of Understanding, a written and signed agreement reached by parties in mediation. **MAA** refers to a Mediator-Assisted Agreement: the parties have not made a written agreement, but with intervention of the mediators, the parties were able to resolve their issues. **ACC** means Accomplished – usually used for training or facilitation cases. **NO** refers to cases in which parties met in mediation, but were unable to reach an agreement. **REJ** refers to cases that JCMS Staff has evaluated as inappropriate for mediation. **REF** refers to cases in which one or more of the parties declined to participate in mediation. This is common in matters involving children: a parent paying child support may want to



see the children more often, but the custodial parent may not want to alter the arrangement. When one or more of the parties will not agree to mediate, we close the case and notify the referring agency.

Chart 5 (right) shows the percentage of cases that reached resolution *when all parties agreed to come to the table*. When parties are willing to participate in mediation, the percentage of cases reaching settlement varies from 64% in court cases to 80% in others. We have a very high success rate with cases referred to us by County agencies.

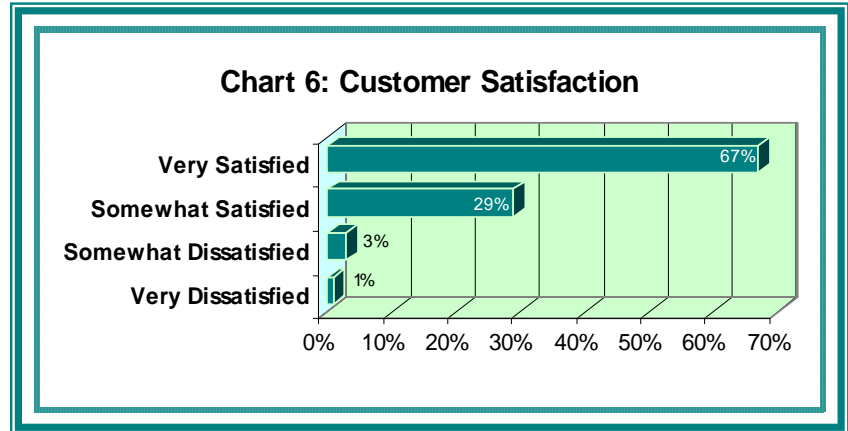


“I wanted to take the time to thank your mediators for not only getting the parties to the table, but for coming up with an amicable resolution. I am amazed - this was a difficult case and I did not foresee a positive resolution. Your mediators did a great job and deserve to be commended.”
Deb Ohno, Office of District Attorney, Economic Crimes Unit

Customer Satisfaction

Our clients give impressive testimony to the power of the mediation process [**Chart 6, below**]. Their level of satisfaction with the process was very high: 96% reported being either “Very Satisfied” or “Somewhat Satisfied,” only 3% said they were “Somewhat Dissatisfied,” and only 1% were “Very Dissatisfied.” A remarkable 92% of those who participate in mediation would recommend it to others – even if they could not reach agreement themselves. [*Analysis of client questionnaires by Cory Stufflebeam and Ian Taylor, 2009*]

In recent years, more and more clients have told us that they called because their friends, co-workers or neighbors used our services and said it really helped. This means that the new clients never had to burden other County agencies with their conflicts.



“JCMS provided facilitators for our workgroups in the Aging Well Project. They were very helpful in keeping the workgroups on task and moving the process along. We were very fortunate to have them.”

Susan Franklin, Human Services

What Our Participants Say About the Process:

“I think mediation is the most effective means for solving human difficulties that I have ever encountered.”

“I can’t reiterate enough how much more effective and productive mediation is than the judicial system.”

“This process is amazing! It helped me more than I thought it would.”

“Everybody is heard in a safe environment. Sometimes the ideas brought to the table are unconventional, but in mediation that’s okay.”

“It was very helpful. I learned not to just think the worst of people.”

“Mediation exceeded my expectations.”

“In mediation, there are no court rules – just a goal for everyone to benefit.”

“The process is valid and valuable, and saves time.”

“Working together is much easier than the fighting.”

“It pays to mediate rather than pursuing other alternatives.”

“I can’t believe that other counties don’t have a service like this. It seems like such a no-brainer to me.”

WORKPLACE MEDIATION FOR JEFFERSON COUNTY EMPLOYEES

Conflict is a necessary part of the workplace, stimulating changes and progress. Unresolved conflicts, however, can disrupt the functioning of a team. Tension may be caused by increased caseloads, changes in operations, needs for new skills, cuts in staffing, and personality differences. Whatever the source of the conflict, mediation can improve communication and decrease tension, and often results in a practical plan to improve the functioning of the individuals or the group.

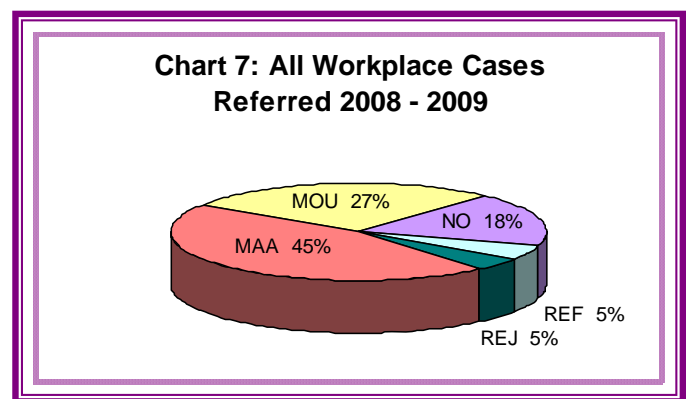
The costs of employee discord can be enormous. Recent research shows that:

- An average manager spends 24% – 60% of his/her time dealing with employee conflict.
- Conflict is a major factor in employee turnover, but in the current economy, people are afraid to leave their jobs, so they are more likely to stay and endure the conflict as well as they can.
- The effects of conflict include wasted time, reduced decision quality, restructuring to separate disputants, lowered motivation, and health costs.

Example: Average pay for Jefferson County employees is \$53,212, or \$26.11 per hour. If two \$15/hour employees spend 10 minutes a day bickering, it consumes \$1,250 per year of their pay. Then each spends 10 minutes talking to the manager – another \$1,250. Their manager earns \$26.11/hour and spends 10 minutes per day with each employee listening to complaints - \$2,175 per year. The two also spend 10 minutes talking to co-workers about each other, and it costs another \$2,500 per year for the four workers. Conflicts can go on for years, and this **one unresolved conflict will cost \$7,175 per year**, not including the effect on the department and its service quality. There are about 55 departments and divisions in the County, so **just one conflict in each unit will cost the County more than \$394,625 each year**. Disputes between employees and supervisors cost more: leadership may be challenged or passively resisted, and the team's work will suffer.

The Good News: The use of workplace mediation by government and business has shown dramatic results. With lower conflict, there are fewer illnesses and absences, and better morale and productivity. JCMS successfully resolved 17 cases during 2008-2009, resulting in a **minimum savings of \$121,975** (many cases involved 3 or more employees, and in a few, the whole team or department was involved).

JCMS piloted this program in Human Services in 2004. They began referring conflicts to us, and other departments followed suit. The cases involved actual or perceived conflict between employees, or with a supervisor, and we provided skilled mediators to assist them. **Chart 7** illustrates that, if the parties are willing to mediate, we can help them to resolve the difficulty nearly every time. Given the costs of continuing conflict, this offers huge savings to the County, and helps to ensure high-quality service to customers by promoting a better work environment.



Some work groups simply needed help in communications or team building, and in 2008 – 2009, JCMS volunteers provided facilitation for 20 such large groups, with impressive results reported.

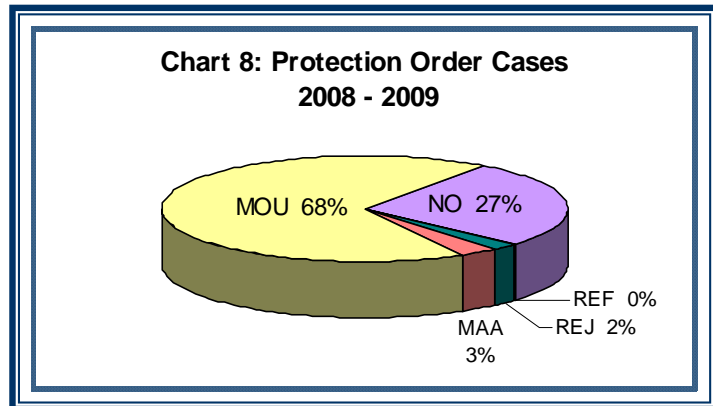
“Thank you so much for helping us out. I have referred two workplace issues to Mediation, and they have both come back successfully resolved. I appreciate your assistance!!”

Joyce Knott, Operations Manager, Human Services

PROTECTION ORDER CONDITIONS CONFERENCES

In 1999, a County Court judge asked us to provide mediators for Permanent Protection Order (PPO) hearings. Parties who had ongoing relationships (neighbors, co-workers, parents) needed help to arrange special provisions in PPOs. More judges approached us, and PPOs are now 9% of our caseload, with 137 cases in 2008 and 125 cases in 2009. Of these 262 cases, 186 have resulted in agreements reached by the parties (8 verbal and 178 written), for an agreement rate of 71% - excellent considering the stress and emotions involved [**See Chart 8, below**].

The Evolution: In October 2000, Women in Crisis (WIC) expressed concerns about the safety and benefit of mediation in cases involving domestic violence (DV). We wanted to continue helping women and their children, so we revised the process. We worked with WIC to offer intensive training in DV Awareness for our facilitators, and we now require such training for work in PPO court. As the advocates observed JCMS volunteers in action, they became enthusiastic about the process. The court selects cases, and our facilitators separate the parties and shuttle between them to help them reach agreements.



Problems & Solutions: In PPO hearings, the judge hears statements from both parties and decides whether to grant the order. Parties often have limited problem-solving skills coupled with intense emotions. A DV victim (usually female) often feels frightened with the defendant standing right there, and may be afraid to state the danger clearly. She may be embarrassed or be intimidated by court processes. With us, victims can discuss their fears and needs in a safe situation, and can get more needs met in an agreement. Women's advocates help them with the court process and safety plans, and offer resource information. Defendants (usually male) are afraid of losing their families. They may also bring a support person. Many have been abuse victims themselves, and typically do not see themselves as abusers. Being supported and heard with empathy can reduce their potential for violence.

If a PPO is granted, the victim usually gets care and control of the children for 120 days, but children's needs, and financial and property issues, may not be addressed. The victim may not have thought past escape, and usually needs help to make future arrangements. Parents need to make temporary plans for visiting children, paying bills, and transferring the defendant's possessions. Parties also need to know what help is available to them after separation (victim advocates, anger-management programs, supervised child-visitation services, counseling, social services, etc.).

The Beneficiaries: When parties make an agreement, the case takes very little court time. We help by having paperwork completed and ready for the judge to review. Children's needs are addressed, and they can have contact with the non-custodial parent, perhaps under supervision. Parties "buy in" to the process, and they are more likely to comply with the agreements they create. Citizens hear fewer loud, violent incidents and have less risk of being caught in crossfire. Indirect benefits are reduced burdens on taxpayers and social assistance programs. Finally, our mediators benefit by building experience in family dynamics. PPO work is demanding, but also rewarding, and more volunteers now want training so that they can participate in this groundbreaking program. Other Colorado counties are adopting our model in their own programs, and we have had inquiries from other states and even another country.

PARENTING CASES referred by Child Support Services Division

Jefferson County Child Support Services (CSS) is constantly working to increase collections from non-custodial parents (NCPs) who are ordered to pay child support to custodial parents (CPs). CSS received a federal grant in May 2005 to study whether the NCPs (usually fathers) were more likely to pay child support if they had access to their children. The Child Access Specialist retained with grant funds facilitated nearly 100 parenting-time cases, and the study found that the rate of payment increased about 17% among the parents who had participated.

When the grant expired in December 2006, JCMS approached CSS to see if they were interested in having our volunteers handle these parenting-time cases. They accepted enthusiastically, and sent a representative to train our volunteers in the particulars of these cases. CSS caseworkers are delighted that they can offer a resource to people whose issues go beyond payment of child support.

This inter-departmental collaboration has had far-reaching benefits for the County and the participants. A common protest from fathers is, "I don't get to see my kids, so why should I pay child support?" Now they feel as though there is some help for them, too. The courts are pleased to be relieved of some parenting-time motions and contempt cases for non-payment. Justice Services now diverts delinquent payers to work crews providing services to the County, instead of further crowding the jails. Children get to know both parents, and when a parenting plan is filed through CSS, there is no filing fee charged to the parents. Last, but certainly not least, the custodial parents and their children are receiving much-needed child support, so fewer families need public assistance.

JCMS received 768 cases from CSS (297 during 2008, and 471 during 2009). CSS reported that the number of those parents making regular payments increases 17-18% (131 more paying parents) *even if they can't reach an agreement or the other parent will not participate* (the custodial parent may be unwilling to alter the parenting time). At an average payment of \$350 per month for child support, the increase works out to *at least an additional \$486,234.00 in collections for CSS as part of this collective effort.*

Expansion in 2008: CSS was so pleased with the results of this program that they expanded it to include contested child-support hearings, in which the payer's reported income is disputed. If the custodial parent believes that the NCP is earning more than he or she reports to CSS, but can't prove it in court, we can help them to discuss a reasonable increase in payment. This means that the custodial parent gets more money immediately, instead of waiting through a lengthy court battle that he/she may not win. Again, this helps CSS, the taxpayers, the courts, and the parents and children.

"Wow - what a resource! If we can't finalize an agreement before Court, if a customer doesn't like our answer and just needs a third party to help him consider other options, or if a parent isn't paying support because he or she wants to see the children, JCMS tackles the issue and resolutions happen. Great customer service in the Child Support world includes being connected to JCMS."

Debbie Moss, Supervisor,
Child Support Services

NEW: TEAM DECISION MAKING with Children, Youth & Families

When children are at risk, they may be removed from the home. The Human Services Department has adopted a Team Decision Making (TDM) model to resolve issues concerning placement of a child outside the home, changes in placement, and return to the home. TDM meetings include family members, social workers, child advocates, and other members of the community. A group of JCMS volunteers has received specialized training in those issues, and they now serve as facilitators when HS

staff is unavailable due to emergencies or overloads. This interdepartmental collaboration prevents the delay and complication of canceling and rescheduling these meetings, and better serves these families.

NEW: POLICE/CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

Citizens who have complaints about law-enforcement personnel can now meet face-to-face with the officer involved. Based on a program developed in Denver, the aim is to provide greater understanding and improve relations between citizens and officers. Each participant gets a chance to hear how the other felt about the encounter, and police can explain procedures that require certain actions. Internal Affairs refers only those cases in which they have determined that there is no actual impropriety by the officer. The citizen understands that any citation or charge against him/her will not be dropped, and that Internal Affairs will close out the complaint against the officer. We have had excellent results with this project, and the City of Wheat Ridge has recently joined the Sheriff's Office in sending these cases to us.

JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Schools have problems with children, children have troubles with each other, teachers and parents may disagree, and truant kids can end up in special schools or detention. Parents don't know what to do with children who won't talk to them. Teachers worry that when one child disrupts the classroom, other kids can't learn. Assistant principals worry that we are losing our kids, and parents would rather leave the problem to someone else. Judges warn that by the time kids get to court, it may be too late to help them.

Teachers are overloaded, and school administrators may have no option but discipline for 'problem' kids. We wanted to help reach these children, and to ease the burden on the schools, so we met with Jefferson County Schools administrators to discuss their needs, and began our School Mediation program in 2005. The results are impressive: when parties come to the mediation table, 78% reach a resolution of their difficulties.

We have experienced child and family mediators, trained in family dynamics and risk/threat assessment, who enjoy working on these cases - they love to see kids succeed, and they have the skills, talent and time to help them solve problems. Children are our future, so it is in everyone's interest to help the schools do their job well, and to relieve them of problems that they are not equipped to handle.

OUR MEDIATORS

At the heart of the success of Jefferson County Mediation Services are the mediation professionals who donate their time and energy to the program on an ongoing basis. The number of unpaid staff mediators has expanded from just 20 when the program began in 1994 to about 200 today.

Backgrounds and Qualifications

Our volunteers come from many educational and employment backgrounds (**Table 2, below**). Because this program is so comprehensive and varied, it attracts volunteer mediators across metro Denver and Colorado. Each mediator brings an individual set of talents, personality and experience. Personal traits, aptitudes, training and life experience make each mediator a unique asset to this outstanding service. Each volunteer must complete a 40-hour mediation training course (or equivalent) prior to joining the program, attend our orientation, and pass a background check by the Sheriff's Office.

JCMS volunteers share a desire to help citizens to resolve conflict without violence. They also view the program as a credible way to build skills and experience that are recognized by Colorado Council of Mediators and Mediation Organizations. Mediators commit to serve for one year at a time; however, 44% of our current volunteers have served for four or more years. Their contributions are immense: without the dedication, expertise and hard work of each of these mediators, JCMS could not have attained the remarkable level of quality that it offers today.

The community benefits because there is an increasing pool of mediators experienced in the huge variety of cases amenable to mediation. Some of our volunteers have gone on to establish or run community mediation services elsewhere – the benefits continue to spread, giving citizens a viable alternative to other, more expensive, destructive, and time-consuming, means of conflict resolution (e.g., litigation or fighting).

Chart 9 - Volunteer Mediator Statistics, 2008-2009

Total Volunteers as of 12/31/09	Total Hours Donated 2008-09	Average Volunteer Hours Per Case	Backgrounds & Areas of Expertise *					
			Legal & Justice	Human Services, Health	Human Resources	Education, Training	Business, Consulting, Management	Gov't., Technical Scientific
193	8840	3.13	41%	30%	7%	21%	40%	23%

* Total is over 100% because many volunteers have multiple areas of background and expertise.

"In June of 2008, JCMS provided facilitators for an all-day planning session of the Governor's Community Corrections Advisory Council. 8 highly-qualified facilitators led over 150 state and local corrections representatives in six focus groups, addressing issues with significant impact on Colorado's \$50-million community corrections program. Their outstanding effort helped members to produce the strategy to improve and expand the Colorado program over the next five years. JCMS is a vital asset to this County."

Tom Giacinti, Director, Justice Services

OUR STAFF

A full-time director and three part-time staff (two of them attorneys) stay very busy handling the myriad details involved in running such a large and varied service. We answer or return over 100 calls per week, open and close over 28 cases, give out information, send referral lists to divorcing couples, field inquiries from other agencies, discuss cases and answer questions from volunteers, and schedule their mediation sessions. We contact parties to persuade them to try mediation, respond to numerous e-mails, manage our database, arrange advanced training for mediators, make presentations to other agencies, attend meetings, and arrange for volunteers to mediate for various judges and magistrates. It's not just a job to us - we are committed to helping our clients in any way that we can serve them.

What People Say About our Staff:

"I have been calling all over the county, and you are the first person who actually listened and helped me. Thank you so much – you don't know what it means to me." *A.C., Citizen*

"I have worked with other mediation organizations around the metro area, and yours is the best. The staff is very supportive, and always willing to listen and teach." *J.B., Volunteer Mediator*

"Thanks so much, not only for what you offer the community, but also what you offer us as mediators, in training to acquire skills and work in fulfilling ways." *D.R., Volunteer Mediator*

"Thank Heaven I found you. You gave me the exact information I needed." *M.P., Citizen*

"I call when I have questions about a difficult case, and you always take time to give me the answers I need. You are a fantastic resource." *C.M., Volunteer Mediator*

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS . . .

Jefferson County Mediation Services (JCMS), a full-service conflict-resolution program, has become an integral part of the local government's operation. First quarter 2010 statistics indicate that over 1,500 cases will be handled in 2010 by about 210 volunteer mediators. Services beyond traditional mediation are also available. Our facilitators assist County departments in holding planning retreats or public hearings on important issues, as well as helping employees work on team building within County departments. We can also provide arbitration upon request. Experienced trainers and presenters share information about communication skills and conflict resolution with school students, non-profit agency personnel, and employees in Jefferson County. County, District, and Small Claims Courts rely upon JCMS volunteers to help control their expanding dockets. Colorado law (H.B. 98-1183) mandates parenting plans, so the demand for mediation between divorcing parents will continue to grow. For Jeffco residents who could not otherwise afford mediation, JCMS provides a solution.

We provide internship opportunities for students of dispute resolution, helping them to complete their guided field-study requirements. JCMS acquires additional personnel at no cost, while providing a service to students that would otherwise not be available, or would cost them additional money.

JCMS staff members and mediators are an important part of the developing mediation culture of our state - they serve the profession as board members, committee members (e.g., program, legislative, etc.), trainers, ambassadors, speakers, role models, and mentors.

We provide our volunteers with varied continuing-education opportunities. We arrange specialized training for handling certain types of cases, such as CSS cases and Protection Order hearings. We invite County agencies to explain their operations and note issues likely to arise in mediations. Judges and magistrates discuss legal and ethical issues. Staff members give presentations on how the courts work and how we can assist different County departments. This helps our volunteers to expand their skills, keeps them abreast of advances in the field, and enables them to handle a wider selection of cases for the County. It also helps us to attract and keep the volunteer services of talented, dedicated, and experienced mediators.

We have demonstrated that mediation programs can lift a tremendous burden from the courts, and we work to support legislation whereby the state, on behalf of the courts, may give appropriate financial assistance to such programs, so they can continue as an important adjunct of the judicial system. In support of that effort, we are working on detailing our program's savings to the County and the courts.

JCMS is recognized as a leader among mediation programs in our state. We all share information, document achievements and results, and offer other counties and cities the benefit of our combined experiences. We will continue to promote the growth of economical, ethical and effective use of conflict resolution in Colorado.

. . . AND A LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE

What is next for JCMS? We are continually working with County agencies to increase our services to them. Employees may be hesitant about trying mediation, so we are working to increase employee acceptance and use of our workplace program. Those who have used mediation are pleased with the results, and agencies that collaborate with us are enthusiastic and committed to our joint efforts. We want to do more!

JCMS will respond to the needs of any County agency that requests more specialized services from us - this is how we have become the largest, most diversified community mediation program in Colorado. These expansions of our program will further the aim of saving resources through proactive conflict management. Our well-organized and competently-staffed County conflict resolution program can serve as a model for an eventual state program of authorized county dispute resolution offices (already in place in several states).

Mediation can become the standard method of managing the conflict inherent in all areas of human activity, and JCMS can lead the way.

Most importantly, for a small annual investment of County funds, JCMS will continue to expand the large payoff in cost savings to governmental agencies and the courts, reduction of ongoing conflict both in the community and within government itself, and an increase in community peace and harmony. JCMS is setting the standard for innovation and progress in the work of conflict resolution across Colorado and throughout the Rocky Mountain region!

“The goal is the creation of an environment that fosters and sustains a culture of conflict competence, where all who experience conflict feel comfortable to raise it, knowing it will be dealt with respectfully and responsibly.”

Jennifer Lynch

JCMS ADVISORY GROUP

Janet Bell, Citizen Liaison

Ray Fleer, Jefferson County Undersheriff

Dick Fullerton, JCMS Volunteer

Gina Gardner-Wood, Legal Advocacy Supervisor, Women in Crisis

Dick Gearke, Sergeant, Lakewood Police Department

Tom Giacinti, Director, Justice Services Division

Pat Gilbert, Assistant County Attorney

Charles T. Hoppin, Judge, County Court

Daniel Horsey, JCMS Mediator

Brooke Jackson, Chief Judge, District Court

Joyce Knott, Administrative Coordinator, Human Services

John Livingston, Magistrate, County & District Courts

Donna Skinner Reed, District Attorney’s Office, First Judicial District

Vicky Reier, Arvada Community Relations Coordinator

Joel Schaefer, Magistrate, County & District Courts

Lorie Schink, Human Resources

Carla Zinanti, Manager, Animal Control

The Advisory Group meets quarterly to consider questions of policy and program direction. On a less formal level, the members serve as a sounding board for new ideas of JCMS staff and volunteers. These representatives of client agencies give us valuable guidance on their conflict-resolution needs and feedback on the quality of the services we provide them. They also serve as advocates of JCMS to their own staffs and other agencies. As public managers and decision-makers, they make observations and offer insights that have been invaluable to the growth and vitality of JCMS. The Advisory Group is an evolving body, adding interested members as new client agencies and jurisdictions join those already served by JCMS.

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