



STATE OF
NEBRASKA
JUDICIAL BRANCH

Office of Dispute
Resolution

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2026

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Overview

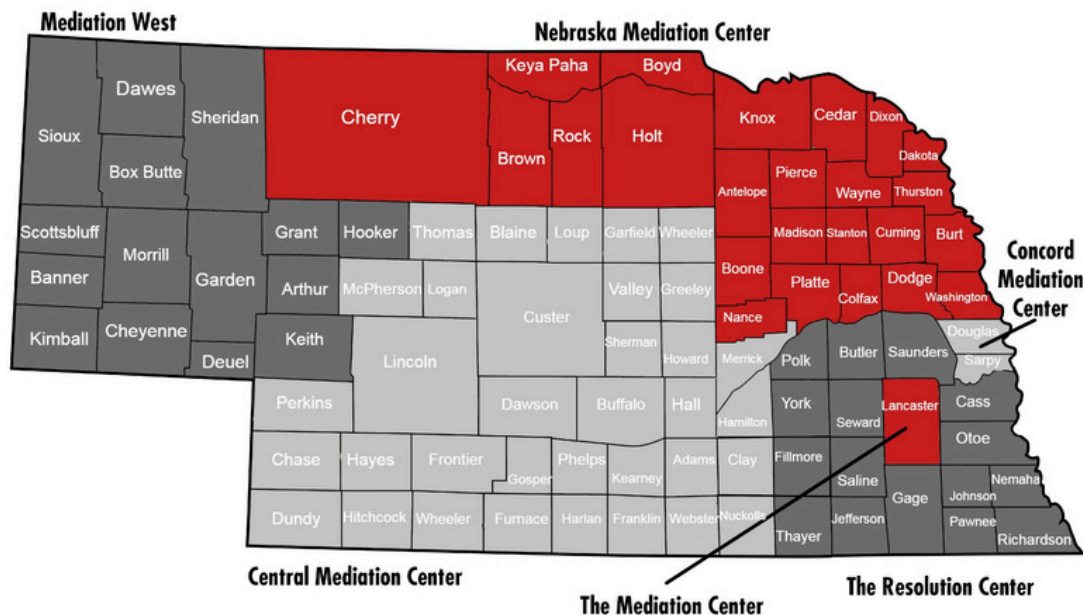
Nebraska is one of only a few states that offer mediation and restorative justice (RJ) facilitations statewide through approved nonprofit mediation centers. These centers are reviewed annually for approval by the Nebraska Judicial Branch's Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation.

Mediation and RJ facilitations are available before filing a court case, during a court case, and after adjudication. Regardless of when mediation or RJ occurs, including before or during a court case, a citizen's right to the judicial process is never interfered with.

Parties can confidently proceed with mediation knowing that mediation communications are confidential. No admission, representation, or statement made in mediation, not otherwise discoverable or obtainable, shall be admissible as evidence or subject to discovery.

Communications that occur as part of an RJ facilitation are also confidential and privileged.

Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 25-2914 and 25-2914.01



Successes, Challenges, & Recommendations

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026, the mediation centers conducted 382 small claims mediations in 22 counties. In Small Claims Court, all litigants are self-represented. By participating in mediation, litigants can participate in a less formal process and develop a custom resolution that fits their situation.

Most small claims mediations occur on the day of court. Attempting mediation is voluntary unless court ordered, and there is a high percentage of small claims cases that don't result in mediation (e.g., no show at court). In rural Nebraska, a mediator may travel a great distance to be available only to find out there are no small claims cases to mediate.

With the demand for small claims mediations increasing, the courts and centers are exploring how to ensure small claims mediation is available and accessible without causing a financial and time burden to the centers.

STATEWIDE DISPUTE RESOLUTION IMPACT

Court-connected alternatives helping Nebraskans resolve conflict with voice, respect, neutrality, and transparency.

The Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) oversees court-connected alternatives helping Nebraskans resolve conflict with voice, respect, neutrality, and transparency. The approved mediation centers expand access to court alternatives, including small claims and parenting plan mediation, child welfare conferencing, and juvenile and adult restorative justice.

3,730 **CASES CLOSED**
Across diverse case types

2,251 **CASES RESOLVED**
through mediation or facilitation

74% **RESOLUTION RATE**
for mediated / facilitated cases

1

HOW PEOPLE REACHED SERVICES

Nearly two-thirds of referrals came through courts and attorneys while one in five began with individuals, families, or friends.

Court **45%**

Attorney **20%**

Self/Family/Friend **19%**

Government Agency **12%**

School **3%**

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WHAT NEBRASKANS NEEDED

53% **Parenting Plans**
1,983 cases

18% **General/Community**
666 cases

13% **Juvenile Justice**
470 cases

10% **Pre-Hearing Conferences**
370 cases

3% **Child Welfare Processes**
119 cases

3% **Other Family/Criminal**
120 cases

3

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PROCESS

Three out of four cases reached a resolution, including full or partial mediated agreements and facilitated conferences.

Full agreement
(902 cases)

Partial agreement
(352 cases)

Facilitated only
(412 cases)

No agreement
(585 cases)

40%

26%

18%

16%

A STATEWIDE NETWORK FOR FAIR, PRACTICAL RESOLUTION

ODR and approved nonprofit mediation centers expand access to court alternatives, strengthen community problem solving, and help participants move forward.



Office of Dispute Resolution Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2026 | July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

This annual report of the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) contains aggregate caseload statistics extracted from the caseload management system used by the ODR and the approved mediation centers. Providing case statistics ensures transparency to the public and complies with statutory requirements (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 25-2920).

The Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Report and previous reports are available at:
<https://nebraskajudicial.gov/administration/publications-reports>

For more information about ODR, visit:
<https://nebraskajudicial.gov/programs-services/mediation-restorative-justice>