The Mission of RESOLUTION SYSTEMS INSTITUTE is to strengthen access to justice by enhancing court alternative dispute resolution.

THE PAST TWO YEARS have changed the world in profound ways, and that applies to RSI and the courts and disputants we serve.

Illness, loss of work and compounding strains on the family have been on the rise. These trends bring more people into court, and our system needs creative solutions to handle the strain.

FOR OVER 25 YEARS, RSI has been there to help courts deliver justice. With new challenges arising...

...we reaffirm our commitment to innovation that expands access.
Once parties end up in court over an eviction, they are often out of good options. Renters can find themselves facing insurmountable debt. Having an eviction filing on their record can limit their options. And lack of legal representation for both tenants and smaller landlords compounds all these problems.

With filings on the rise, many courts are turning to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as a key response to this crisis. RSI has been diligently working to stay in lockstep with these national efforts.

We developed the Eviction Mediation Special Topic as a central hub for everything courts need to know. This resource includes:

- key program development considerations
- sample forms and notices other programs can emulate
- the best available studies on eviction mediation
- a regularly updated database of known court-connected eviction diversion programs across the country
- a round-up of our eviction diversion posts on the Just Court ADR blog
STABILIZING LIFE AT HOME

In addition to our role as national thought leaders in court ADR, we have been on the front lines in Illinois providing eviction mediation services.

In 2021, we developed programs in Kane County, serving west suburban Chicagoland, Kankakee (south suburbs) and Winnebago (Rockford metro area) counties. All together, these programs operate in judicial districts that serve almost one million Illinois residents.

Our full-time staff connects parties with critical resources like rental assistance and legal aid and invites parties to sit down with a trained mediator via Zoom.

Our mediators help parties explore their options, including how to keep the tenant in the home, or allow them time to find other housing.

Illinois had a moratorium on evictions until October 3, 2021. In just under three months of operation, our programs:

- Served 115 households
- Mediated 66 cases, resulting in 45 agreements and an 89% satisfaction rate among surveyed parties
- Made over 200 referrals to housing counseling, rental assistance and legal aid services

“I was adamant that this was a stall tactic by the renter but now see he genuinely wants to pay and do the right thing.”

“Both sides were heard and the Mediator ensured that an agreement was reached that benefited both sides.”

“I left with some peace of mind.”
In 2020, RSI began a project exploring the question, “How might family court online dispute resolution serve thinly resourced parents, courts and communities?”

In particular, we wanted to see whether online dispute resolution (ODR) might help parents develop plans covering parenting time and decision-making authority when they split up. With support from the JAMS Foundation, we embarked on a project to study family ODR and bring together expert opinions on this topic.

We began by developing a framework in which to consider the study question, starting by identifying whether there was a need. We then considered how this project would address several key factors: accessibility, ethicality, effectiveness, feasibility and sustainability.
Our exploration of this framework took place over several steps.

We researched the current state of family ODR in the US. We then recruited 37 experts from across the country and surveyed them about the need for ODR, when it is suitable and unsuitable, barriers to ODR, how ODR could be developed and sustained, and the benefits of and concerns about ODR.

We also surveyed state court alternative dispute resolution administrators nationwide about the status of family mediation and ODR and whether there was any need for mediation and ODR among those who are thinly resourced.

We then convened the experts via Zoom three times to discuss the issues in the framework and gain their perspectives. We are using the results of those elements, plus RSI’s own 27 years of experience in court ADR, as the basis for a forthcoming report.
Since RSI’s inception, we have been a clearinghouse for vital information about court ADR. In the last couple years, we have focused on developing specialized resources that cover the most critical issues in the field:

The Complete Guide to Program Success
In 2020, we published the final chapters of GPS, the virtual guidebook for designing, managing and evaluating court ADR programs.

New Special Topics
We added several new resource collections covering topical issues in court ADR. Most recently, we published our guides on Restorative Justice and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility in court ADR.

Court ADR Connection Newsletter
Our monthly newsletter includes relevant court ADR news, reviews of court ADR research, and important updates from our blog and social media accounts.
The American Arbitration Association - International Centre for Dispute Resolution (AAA-ICDR) Foundation was an early supporter of RSI’s work with eviction mediation. AAA-ICDR enabled us to kickstart our mediation program in Kane County and is fully underwriting our efforts to share our eviction diversion expertise with court ADR professionals across the country.

India Johnson, President and CEO of the AAA-ICDR, said of RSI, “We are delighted to support the critical work RSI is doing in their programs. Not only are they making an impact by providing mediation to underserved communities, but they leverage their expertise with in-depth evaluation and share best practices nationally.”

The AAA-ICDR’s Foundation’s mission is to “Support the prevention and resolution of conflicts by expanding access to alternative dispute resolution.” Their values include “aim[ing] to eliminate barriers to and expand the use of alternative dispute resolution to help marginalized and underserved groups’ access justice.” The Foundation’s alignment with RSI on these key competencies has made it an invaluable partner in our own mission.
Hello Friends of RSI,

By now, I’m sure you’re sick of hearing phrases like "We are living in unprecedented times." Me too. The reality is, change is constant, and while almost no one could have predicted the particular sorts of changes we’ve seen recently, I feel grateful to be here, figuring out where we go next.

For RSI, an organization I have happily served for over 25 years, adaptation is a way of life. Back in the early days, ADR was seen as cutting edge: a new way to shake up the system, and for that it encountered its fair share of resistance. Nowadays, ADR is much more widely accepted by our justice system, but the need to adapt and innovate hasn’t gone away.

And so, looking back on these past couple years, I’m proud of what we have accomplished and quite excited about where things are headed. I hope that our experimentation with technology to accommodate social distancing and expanded ADR offerings will improve access to justice in the long run.

None of this should minimize the fact that many folks are still hurting. But we at RSI hope to do right by them in creating systems that work better for everyone. Conflict might be unavoidable, but resolution shouldn’t be inaccessible.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Yates
Executive Director
You can support RSI's mission by making a donation at https://www.mightycause.com/organization/Resolution-Systems-Institute.

Resolution Systems Institute is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.