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### Statewide Evaluation

Thirty years ago, legislation was passed in the state of Michigan to establish the Citizen Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP). The purpose of the initiative was to provide Michigan citizens throughout the state with a means of resolving minor disputes without having to go to court.

Twenty-six CDRP centers, one of which was Northern Community Mediation (NCM), were established such that every county was covered by one of the centers. Community volunteers were required to participate in a forty-hour training in order to serve as facilitators in mediating the disputes. The primary types of cases that were mediated involved small claims and landlord/tenant cases.

Although there are presently only 18 CDRP centers, the program has grown in volume and in complexity of the types of cases that are mediated. The only types of cases that are not mediated today by the CDRP centers are those that involve establishing innocence or guilt in criminal cases.

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) is in the process of conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the Citizen Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP). Part of that evaluation involves interviews of representative individuals from each of the centers by an independent researcher. On January 30 and 31, researcher Harry Mika talked with 41 individuals who have connections with NCM. The participants represented mediators, board members, community leaders, legal professionals and staff.

The findings of this study will result in a comprehensive report titled "An Evaluation of Michigan's Community Dispute Resolution Program at 30 Years: Appraising the Past, Assessing the Present, and Planning the Future." This comprehensive reports will be available on May 1, 2020.

Northern Community Mediation is a non-profit organization that provides an alternative means of resolving conflict. Trained mediators, who meet with the parties involved in a dispute, facilitate so that the individuals themselves can resolve the conflict

Anyone interested in learning more about Northern Community Mediation should contact Dr. Jane Millar at 231.487.1771.

Pictured from left to right: Izabela Babinska, Kirstyn Horan, Dennis Halverson, Tina DeMoore