

In 2010, 92% of juvenile cases in Texas Courts were because of delinquency.¹

The Problem:

Truancy is “linked to significant negative behavior and characteristics in adults.”² Criminalizing minor misbehaviors affects the school-to-prison pipeline. Traditionally, the juvenile justice system criminalizes delinquent behavior, penalizes parent contribution, and prosecutes youth-related criminal behavior. The Texas legislature recognized the school-to-prison pipeline by mandating schools to intervene early to address attendance and behavior issues.

“Truancy is a gateway to crime. High rates of truancy are linked to high daytime burglary rates and high vandalism [T]ruancy is the most powerful predictor of juvenile delinquent behavior.”

Manual to Combat Truancy, United States Department of Education in cooperation with the Department of Justice (1996)

The Solution:

Early intervention can interrupt a student’s slide toward delinquency and put him or her back on the right track. The **Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) for Lubbock County**³ offers effective alternatives to the traditional options for juveniles before, during, and after contact with the juvenile justice system – with an emphasis on problem-solving and preventing juvenile delinquency. Compared to traditionally-imposed confinement and pecuniary penalties, ODR’s problem-solving initiatives encourage the youth (and all necessary parties) to accept full responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Given the increase in delinquent conduct cases, the ODR created two programs that implement positive behavioral intervention and support for youth: juvenile and pre-plea mediations. These programs are incorporated in ODR’s **Texas Youth Problem-Solving System (TYPS)**. This integrated, non-punitive approach to recurring youth-related offenses offers comprehensive youth-centered services, resources and support (early intervention, mediation, life goal/skills setting, training, family resources, etc) through referrals from participating entities.

TYPS accepts both official referrals (from schools, law enforcement agencies, and juvenile justice) *and* non-official referrals (from parents and other community members). It targets at-risk youth (including first offenders and status offenders) and their parents in rural, suburban, and urban areas to address the high rates of youth-related behavioral issues and related involvement in the judicial system.

By referring minor offenses to mediation, the judicial process is freed up for more serious and violent juvenile and adult offenses, and the expenses associated with the inherent delays in formal adversarial processes are drastically reduced. Instead of costly and unnecessary confinement for select juvenile offenses, youth can correct delinquent behavior before a criminal conviction. Participants benefit from a more timely process, reduced financial burdens, and greater opportunities to become productive members of their communities.

¹ See www.oca.org. Research report from the Office of Court Administration for juveniles in district and county courts for September 1, 2009 to August 30, 2010. Of 32,200 juvenile cases filed, over 29,000 were for delinquency.

² Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Dept of Justice, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (Sept. 2001).

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Texas Youth Problem-Solving System (TYPS)*

Closing the Gateway to Crime. Opening the Road to Success.

