

***POLK COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CENTER  
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**MEDIATION SERVICES**

**Neighborhood Mediation.** Mediation is a confidential and “out-of-court” procedure which gives parties involved in a dispute a chance to meet and, with the help of a mediator, reach a resolution or agreement.

**School Mediations:** When an incident occurs at a school between two or more students that staff believes warrants mediation intervention, school personnel may contact the Polk County Attorney’s office and request free Mediation services. The mediation will allow the parties/students involved in a dispute a chance to discuss the issues in a safe setting and, with the help of a professional mediator, reach a resolution or agreement that works for everyone involved. We will provide the trained & licensed mediator free of charge.

**Truancy Mediation.** The Truancy Court Program is a joint effort between the Polk County Attorney’s Office, the Des Moines Public Schools and the Polk County District Court to reach the parents of truant children between the ages of 6-16 years before the filing of formal charges.

Parents of truant students are requested to attend court and are given the opportunity to participate in mediation with school personnel.

**Victim Offender Mediation.** VORP stands for Victim Offender Reconciliation Program. This program attends to needs of crime victims that many times are not addressed by the criminal justice system.

VORP is a meeting between the victim and the offender. The meeting is facilitated by a trained mediator and takes place in a controlled safe setting. The victim can choose to have a support person (victim advocate) at the meeting to provide support. At the meeting, the victim is given the opportunity to express feelings, ask questions and offer opinions. A written agreement that determines restitution or other matters can also be drawn up at the meeting. In most cases, these written agreements become incorporated in court orders that offenders are required to abide.

**Child Welfare Mediation.** Child Welfare Mediation assists parents and other involved adults in developing cooperative solutions for children and families.

Whether there is a dispute or a planning need, a trained mediator serves as a neutral third party to create an environment that supports caring adults to develop options for the child’s future in a cooperative way.

**Victim Panels.** Participants include the victim(s), a facilitator, and a victim advocate. The goals of the Victim Panels are:

- To enhance the emotional healing of victims by offering an outlet to speak of their experience and to believe that the telling of their story may prevent others from experiencing a similar victimization.
- To enable offenders to understand criminal activity from the victim perspective.
- To imprint in the minds of offenders true stories, told from the heart, which might be recalled when a decision to commit a crime is again an option.

**Offender Panels.** Participants include the offender(s), a facilitator, and a Coordinator from the Polk County Attorney's Office. Offender Panels usually take place in the school system. The goals of the Offender Panels are:

- To help offenders remember the hurt they caused themselves, their families and the victim(s).
- To let others know what happens once you are in the criminal system. What jail is like and how you lose control of your life.
- To keep the youth from following the same path they did.

## **ALL MEDIATION SERVICES ARE FREE TO THE PARTICIPANTS**

### **RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CENTER - PROGRAMS**

**Bad Check Restitution Program:** The Polk County Attorney's Bad Check Program offers offenders whose cases have been submitted for prosecution for writing bad checks a chance to avoid being prosecuted by giving them one final chance to pay restitution to their victims. The offenders are offered a chance to plead guilty to Theft in the 5<sup>th</sup> Degree. For most, this is a lesser charge than they could have been prosecuted for. They also must pay for and complete a day long class.

**Youthful Offender Program:** The Youthful Offender Program uses a community approach to rehabilitation of youthful offenders.

The program is designed as an alternative for targeted offenders and diverts them from prison sentences or ineffective probation sentences by providing programming in the areas of Education, Substance Abuse and Attitude / Behavior change

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**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program:** VORP is a meeting between the victim and the offender. The meeting is facilitated by a trained mediator and takes place in a controlled safe setting. The victim can choose to have victim advocate at the meeting to provide support. At the meeting, the victim is given the opportunity to express feelings, ask questions and offer opinions. A written agreement that determines restitution or other matters can also be drawn up at the meeting. In most cases, these written agreements become incorporated in court orders that offenders are required to abide by.

**Elder/Dependant Adult Abuse Program:** SAVE (Save the Abuse of the Vulnerable and Elderly) is focused on prevention and education for caretakers/perpetrators. This program is for the abuser and involves several classes to help change attitudes and behaviors and prevent further abuse and mistreatment of the dependant adult.

**Juvenile Diversion Program:** The Early Services Project is an intervention and prevention program for delinquents under the age of twelve (12). The children receive family-oriented programming based on thorough assessment and skill building. The process combines traditional methods with age appropriate consequences, a positive role model and the development of long-term family recreational activities. The parents and child sign an agreement, which includes the following conditions:

\* The goal is to decrease the likelihood these offenders will continue to break the law.

**License Reinstatement Program:** The License Reinstatement Program (LRP) began in June 2004 as a result of collaborative efforts between several agencies, including Polk County, Department of Transportation, and the Clerk of Court. It is a program that allows people who have been suspended for non-payment of traffic tickets to get their license back.

The program is set up to maximize the potential for an individual to succeed at paying off their fines. Payment plans are worked out between the offender and LRP staff. Not only this, but they must make their payments on time and maintain insurance on their vehicle.

**Payment Plans / Collections:** The Collections staff is responsible for collecting past-due debt from anyone in Polk County with outstanding Court Ordered obligations.

This program is also set up to maximize the potential for an individual to succeed at paying off their Court Ordered financial obligations. Of all monthly payments collected, Polk County receives 40% of those, which goes to the general county fund.