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ANNOTATION:

DESIGN: The authors conducted a survey of 342 organizations across the United States that were known to use restitution or mediation. Of those responding, 79 programs had VOM components. The vast majority of these programs developed in the 1980s. VOM is a rapidly growing program model used by counties of all sizes.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Respondents using VOM provided a rank ordering of goals, as follows: accountability, restitution, victim wholeness, reconciliation, rehabilitation, alternative to institutionalization, and punishment.

The bulk of referrals come from the court and probation/intake officers. Most programs excluded certain offenders, usually violent offenders and sex offenders. About 55% of the mediators were paid staff. Some 43% of the mediation programs were private/nonprofits, with another 21% being housed in probation departments.

Eighty percent of program respondents indicated that contracts were agreed upon nearly all the time. Seven out of ten contracts included some form of restitution. Over ninety percent of the programs monitored the contracts to assure compliance. Support of judges and others were rated as very high.

Less than half the programs had been evaluated in the previous five years. Survey respondents were favorably disposed toward mediation. Authors conclude that mediation programs are widespread in the US and functioning well.