
Data are presented on the results of a large juvenile court mediation effort in Cobb County, Georgia. Of primary interest is the return rate of youth to juvenile court. Seven hundred and ninety-nine youth who went through mediation between April, 1993 and June, 1996 were compared with a similar control group gathered from 1990-92. Seventy-one percent of the mediated youth were male and 72% were white. The average age was 13.9. The average number of prior court contacts was .16. Twenty-four percent had status offense charges, 35% had “less serious property” charges, and 22% had “less serious personal” charges.

There was no difference in return rates to court for the two groups. The average return rate for mediated youth was 34.2%; for the non-mediated, it was 36.7%. Three-quarters of the mediated youth return to court were returned for violation of the conditions of the mediation agreement. Youth processed by experience mediators tended to do better than those who were handled by less experienced mediators.

While the study did not contain a cost analysis, the authors pointed out that it took only a third of the time to process the mediated cases as contrasted with the non-mediated cases.

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