

SAN LUIS VALLEY VICTIM-OFFENDER RECONCILIATION PROGRAM – 2001 Program Report

Victim-Offender Mediation Case Referrals: The year 2001 turned out to be an even busier year than 2000. We increased our referrals this year by 12. We have had 68 new referrals this year, along with a carry-over of 17 cases from 2000. 47 of the referrals were mediated with signed contracts or otherwise successfully conciliated. We closed 65 cases in 2001, and will carry over 20 into 2002. This year we received many of our referrals from the Alamosa Municipal Court. We are very pleased to have continued such a positive relationship with the City of Alamosa. We have also established a good relationship with the public defender's office and our referrals from them are on the increase. Other referrals continue to come from the district attorney's office, juvenile magistrates, probation, juvenile diversion, mental health, and schools. Many thanks to our 20 loyal volunteer mediators for their help with case facilitation.

School Initiatives: The School Programs remained very strong during 2001. During the Spring '01 semester, we provided peer mediation training for 2 high schools and 3 middle schools, held conflict skills workshops for an after-school program in San Luis, and hosted the 2d annual Teen Mediator Summit at ASC in March for around 70 high school mediators and their sponsors from SLV area high schools. For the Fall '01 semester, we provided peer mediation training to 7 high schools and 6 middle schools, adding Antonito and Sanford to our participating districts. We also initiated a focus on restorative alternatives to suspension/expulsion, by hosting two workshops for school administrators and other interested community members. This included a half-day workshop in May attended by around 50 people and a two-day intensive training in August attended by around 30 people. As a result, the Alamosa school district has adopted a restorative discipline committee and other new policies. We also were invited to begin activities with the Suspended and Expelled Student program initiated by Ortega Middle School in Alamosa in December, teaching healthy conflict skills to these youth.

This work has brought to some fruition the concerns raised in our 2000 annual report, regarding the growing trend towards criminalization of typical adolescent behaviors and the expulsion of younger and younger teens from local schools. We were pleased to work on these initiatives with two local churches, Sacred Heart Parish and Alamosa United Methodist.

-Alice M. Price, Director

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