

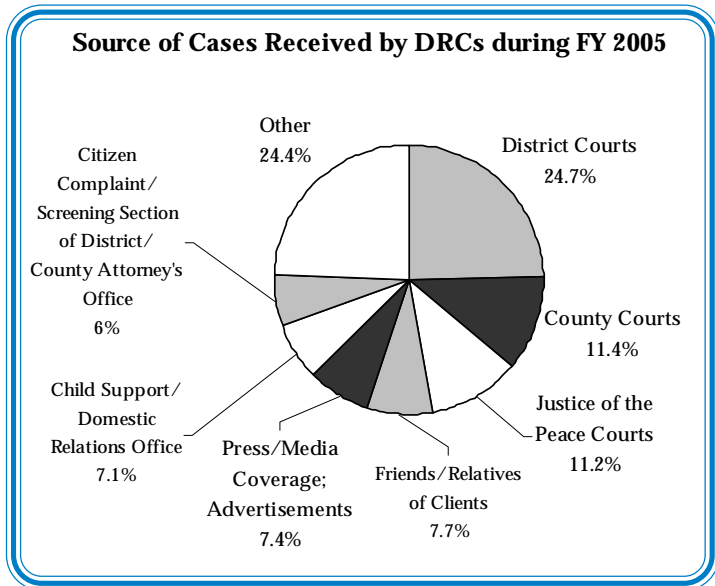


Alternative Dispute Resolution Centers

Courts often refer cases to mediation in an effort to expedite resolution of disputes and reduce the number of cases that must be heard by the court. In addition, alternative dispute resolution centers are often able to resolve disputes early, diverting potential cases that would have otherwise been filed in the courts.

Under Chapter 152 of the Civil Practice and Remedies Code, counties are authorized to establish an alternative dispute resolution system. In 2005, there were 17 dispute resolution centers (DRCs) operating in Texas. Most DRCs were formed as non-profit centers that have contracts for providing resolution services to the counties. Although the services offered by the DRCs vary, all centers offer family and civil mediation.

In order to maintain an alternative dispute resolution system, counties may collect a filing fee of up to \$15 on most civil cases heard by a district court, county-level court, or probate court and may set a court cost of up to \$5 in certain civil cases filed in justice courts.¹ Some DRCs are funded solely by the filing fees, while other centers may receive supplemental funding from the counties or cities they serve or from grants, fees to clients, and fees for mediation training. Most centers depend on trained volunteers to serve as the neutral mediators in cases handled by the DRC.



Summary of Activity September 1, 2004 through August 31, 2005

Center	Cases Pending 9/1/2004	Docket Adjustment	Cases Received	Cases Closed			Cases Pending 8/31/2005	Clearance Rate
				Prior to Hearing	Hearing Held	Unresolved but Closed		
Amarillo - Potter & Randall counties	21	6	478	229	225	14	37	97.9%
Austin - Travis County	No Reports Received							
Beaumont - Jefferson County	36	-1	1,322	676	401	224	56	98.4%
Bryan/College Station - Brazos County	31	0	175	24	142	20	20	106.3%
Conroe - Montgomery County	1	-1	891	83	710	55	43	95.2%
Corpus Christi - Nueces County	444	-431	177	19	100	62	9	102.3%
Dallas - Dallas County	473	0	2,370	705	931	715	492	99.2%
Denton - Denton County	No Reports Received							
El Paso - El Paso County ²	162	2	162	15	75	68	41	97.5%
Fort Worth - Tarrant County	1,167	-1	1,101	211	683	329	1,044	111.1%
Houston - Harris County	388	-686	3,477	273	2,245	405	257	84.1%
Kerrville - Kerr County	No Reports Received							
Lubbock - Lubbock & surrounding counties	785	0	2,528	1,157	706	808	642	105.7%
Paris - Lamar County	No Reports Received							
Richmond - Fort Bend County	No Reports Received							
San Antonio - Bexar County	776	0	5,761	4,779	585	776	397	106.6%
Waco - McLennan County	No Reports Received							
TOTALS	4,122	-1,114	18,280	8,156	6,728	3,408	2,997	100.7%

1. Filing fees authorized by Chapter 152, Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

2. OCA received five reports for September 2004 through January 2005 from the center in El Paso.