

Article: Faster, Cheaper & As Satisfying: An Evaluation of Alaska's Early Resolution Triage Program (Marz 2016)



The Alaska Court System, in partnership with the Alaska Pro Bono Program, created the Early Resolution Program (ERP) to address many issues with which courts across the country are grappling: how to efficiently and effectively manage divorce and custody cases involving self-represented litigants (SRLs), and how to triage cases to the appropriate resolution approach. This paper reported on an evaluation of the Anchorage ERP. It found different outcomes for ERP cases that settled than comparable cases that proceeded on the regular trial process track with respect to the following outcomes:

- time to disposition,
- number of case processing steps, and
- number of motions to modify filed within two years of the disposition.

The Early Resolution Program addressed many issues – self-representation in family law cases, triaging to determine the appropriate resolution approach, the importance of early intervention and the desire to use a simplified process and a problem-solving approach. This evaluation showed that ERP has been an effective and efficient way to resolve newly filed contested divorce and custody cases involving two self-represented parties. The ERP resulted in much faster resolutions with substantially fewer processing steps than similarly situated cases that are resolved in the typical adversarial fashion.

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