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THE FACTS ABOUT COLLECTION PRACTICES AT THE MESA MUNICIPAL COURT

Several Court Executive Development papers have focused on the topic of collections of court ordered fines and sanctions. The three primary collection practices these papers highlighted were dunning notices, financial interviewing and collection telephone calls. This research evaluates each collection practice to determine which is the most effective. A second piece of research attempts to determine the best practice for establishing a payment schedule.

The Mesa Municipal Court in Mesa, Arizona has an established collection program, administered by an in-house collection staff. The program is supported by an automated collection system fully integrated with the case management system. The source data used to evaluate each practice came from 12 months of data electronically extracted from the Court's computer system.

Dunning notices, financial interviews and collection telephone calls were segmented into timeframes to provide an accurate assessment of each practice's effectiveness. A Chi-square Goodness of Fit test was used to evaluate the demographic and economic characteristics of 200 defendants in

order to determine a best practice for establishing a payment schedule.

The results were enlightening. Mesa Municipal Court has a 76% compliance rate with its payment schedules. Financial interviews proved to be the most effective way to collect fines and sanctions. Dunning notices were close behind. In terms of overall utility, the use of dunning notices is clearly the most cost effective practice. Telephone collection calls also proved effective, but, if one considers the expense of the staff, the return on investment made it the least cost effective practice.

The attempt to establish a best practice for setting payment schedules was not successful. Payment schedules should be established with the intent of giving the defendant the best opportunity to succeed.

This [research paper](#) is available in its entirety in portable document format. To access, you must first obtain and install the Adobe Acrobat Reader



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