



# DRS DIALOGUE

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2 • FALL 2024

DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM DRS!

DRS WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL THOSE IN THE ADR  
COMMUNITY ACROSS VIRGINIA HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



**Mediation**

**Parent Education**

**Judicial Settlement  
Conference**

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# A HEARTFELT FAREWELL

ANN WARSHAUER,  
PARENT EDUCATION  
COORDIANTOR

I want to take this opportunity to announce my retirement from the position of Parent Education Coordinator. My involvement in parent education seminars was prior to joining Dispute Resolution Services when I worked to develop and teach the Co-Parenting: Two Parents, Two Homes curriculum for Fairfax County Public Schools. In 1999, the General Assembly directed the OES to convene an advisory committee to study the proposal to require parents in contested child custody, support and visitation cases to attend a parenting education seminar.

I served on that committee that was chaired by Geetha Ravindra who was the manager at DRS. The committee recommended that parents should be required to attend a 4-hour seminar and the General Assembly passed legislation making that requirement law, in 2000.

The legislation was passed without designating the body responsible for implementation or oversight. I, and several others, volunteered to identify and train seminar providers following the guidelines contained in HD 26, 2000 and the Virginia Code section 16.1-278.15. For the next five years, I tried to find a suitable department that could provide the necessary oversight.

I met with the Secretary of the Department of Education and a Commissioner at the Department of Social Services. Everyone said that oversight should be in the Supreme Court.

In 2006, Geetha Ravindra offered me the position as the first Parent Education Coordinator.

There are many people responsible for the success of the parent education program. Sally Campbell followed Geetha as DRS manager and under her leadership the parent education program grew in the number of seminar providers and families served. Building on the foundation created by Geetha and Sally, Dan Wassink, current DRS manager, further strengthened the program.



From left to right: Paul DeLosh, Jon Lamp, Ann Warshauer, Dan Wassink, Michael Barr, Jordan Blackstone

From the seminar provider application process to updated policies and procedures, the program has strengthened support for seminar providers and the families that attend.

I am grateful to Paul DeLosh, Director of the Department of Judicial Services, and to the entire DRS staff, Dan Wassink, Michael Barr, Jon Lamp and Jordan Blackstone. Each of them has played a vital role in making the program successful.

My most heart-felt thanks goes to the seminar providers whose dedication and professionalism has helped thousands of families and children over the past 25 years. They have made parents more aware of ways to help their children through a very difficult transition. It has been a privilege to serve as the first Parent Education Coordinator. I look forward to the future of the position and the program.



Friday April 25th, 2025

# 2025 PARENT EDUCATORS SYMPOSIUM

Dispute Resolution Services will host its annual Parent Educators Symposium on April 25, 2025, at the Virginia Public Safety Training Center in Hanover. The symposium is an opportunity for parent education seminar providers to network and receive professional development. The theme of the 2025 symposium will be on resistance to parental visitation. There will be a guest speaker and a panel. More details to follow.

# JOINT COORDINATORS MEETING

MICHAEL BARR,  
ADR ANALYST

On 7 November, DRS virtually convened the coordinators (both contract and municipal) for a joint, annual meeting to discuss topics relevant to mediators with both General District Court and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts. Coordinators from 25 courts participated in a discussion that covered a variety of topics. On court referrals, Dan shared the [VMN Court Referrals Task Force Best Practices Report](#), discussed elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter. We also answered questions on how role plays can be used as part of the co-mediation process necessary for certification; find the [full report here](#) and also see discussion in Spring 2024 edition.

Michael, with the assistance of Kelly Bruno, discussed [new resources and training for determining child support](#) in contested cases, as also reported in the DRS Dialogue Summer 2024 edition. He and Dan plan to meet with this committee in January to discuss potential changes to the Guidelines for the requirements of aspiring J&DR mediators. Jon reviewed the success of EVPS for reporting mediation statistics, capturing details from upwards of 90% of all payment submissions after its first year. He also discussed plans to roll-out a template for a new revised Mediation Evaluation Form (ADR 1002) for parties. The new evaluation is developed from extensive research and deliberation over the past 6 months among DRS staff, and up to ten coordinators have volunteered to pilot the form in their courts.

DRS also shared a draft of the new and improved Fiscal Report (*see p12*), and, in general, facilitated open discussion and sharing of the coordinators to allow them to be resources to each other.

## DRS IN THE FIELD

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE FOR DISTRICT COURTS

JON LAMP,  
ADR PROGRAM  
SPECIALIST

In August, Dan and Jon travelled to Roanoke for the Judicial Conference of Virginia for District Courts. This is an annual conference organized by the Educational Services Department within OES to provide district court judges with updates and education opportunities.



Jon and Dan talked about all things ADR with GDC and JDR judges from around the Commonwealth, and distributed fliers and brochures about the services our office offers and the programs we oversee. We are grateful to have an exhibitor's table at this conference as it gives us the chance to discuss ADR face-to-face with many judges from different regions, offering insights into issues faced by courts and mediators - as well as new opportunities to expand ADR services



## DRS IN THE FIELD (CONT.)

DAN WASSINK &  
MICHAEL BARR

VMN Annual Meeting

Dan and Michael co-facilitated a total of three sessions during the virtual portion of the VMN annual meeting in mid-September.

The first session – “Setting the Stage” - focused on the recent work of the Role Play committee. Dan joined fellow committee members Karen Richards and Lydia Ray – as well as Rachel Milner Gillers, Director of the Georgetown Conflict Transformation Lab – to discuss and promote the committee’s report. The report offers a structured process and tips for certified mentors wishing to incorporate role play simulations in their work with future mediators. Role plays are seen as one way to address the shortage of court-referred cases needed for certification, especially at the General District Court level.

Later in the week, Dan joined Brandon Bastian, Marialuisa Gallozzi and Carolyn Fitzpatrick for a session titled, “Where Did All the Referrals Go?” The quartet updated attendees on the results of nearly two years of work by the VMN Court Referrals Task Force. In addition to a comprehensive best practices report and ongoing outreach efforts to local courts (see the VMN Court Referrals Task Force article in this edition), task force members have produced informational and marketing materials for use by certified mediators, clerks of court, and others.

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On September 20th Michael (with DRS) and Christine Poulson (Executive Director, Resolution Virginia) presented on the subject, “How Legislation Impacts Mediation, and Mediators Impact Legislation.” About 24 persons attended the virtual session on the final day of the conference. Michael focused his discussion on the process used to compile the annual Legislative Report that DRS shares with certified mediators each July 1st, the date that all proposed and signed legislation in the Commonwealth takes effect. Mediators were encouraged in their ethical duty of competence (J in the Standards of Ethics), and the sharing of legal information (F), but not advice. Christine discussed her experience working as an advocate for mediation with the General Assembly and shared information on how other states fund court-connected ADR programs and community mediation centers. The goal for both was twofold: to empower mediators to understand legislative changes and to advocate for laws that will improve the public’s access to justice.

# DRS IN THE FIELD (CONT.)

FUTURE ATTORNEY-MEDIATORS

DAN WASSINK,  
DRS MANAGER

In a span of less than one month, Dan was invited to travel to two universities to speak to future lawyers who one day will hopefully add the title of ‘attorney-mediators.’

In mid-September, Dan visited the campus of Christopher Newport University in Newport News at the invitation of Senior Justice William Mims of the Virginia Supreme Court. Senior Justice Mims leads an Introduction to American Law class, structured to mimic the first-year curriculum of most law schools. He believes it is important for future lawyers to understand that the practice of law does not have to be overtly adversarial. Dan’s presentation echoed that sentiment, and included a personal appeal to the students’ future selves to act in the best interest of their clients by supporting the practice of mediation, or by becoming certified mediators themselves. In a handwritten note to Dan following his presentation, Senior Justice Mims stated that his students’ “enthusiasm for your talk was obvious. You may even have sowed the seeds for some new mediators!”



*Senior Justice William Mims with his pre-law students*

Dan headed southeast again in early October, this time to speak to a William and Mary Law School class led by fellow mediator, Doug Spoons. This time Dan focused on the ‘universality’ of mediation, pointing out that we all mediate to some extent in our lives, whether formally or informally. He also touted the ability of mediators to turn conflict into an opportunity, rather than something to be feared, and the tools that all good mediators use to make this happen.

## DRS IN THE FIELD (CONT.)

JUDICIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

MICHAEL BARR,  
ADR ANALYST

On 11 November 2024, Dan Wassink and Michael Barr travelled to Glen Allen to introduce new clerks to the office of Dispute Resolution Services and cultivate a relationship with the courts they serve. As part of a 3-day training to prepare them for their role, half of the clerks will serve in General District Courts and the rest in Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts across Virginia. We provided an overview of the three programmatic areas DRS manages in court-referred Mediation, the Judicial Settlement Conference, and Parent Education. We discussed the benefits of each area, using relevant statistics to illustrate value and impact, and highlight the authorizing sections from the Code of Virginia.

A focus DRS enjoined clerks to remember is that, by right of statute, parties to any dispute can be referred to an orientation session in which to weigh their options of an alternative method for resolving and managing their dispute besides litigation. By statute, as well, parties (often parents) in contested custody cases are required to attend the four-hour education seminar to gain insights into practices that will allow them to put the child first. Each area of dispute resolution serves a different clientele and represents diverse implementation of the Supreme Court of Virginia's decades-long commitment to advance the goals of Access to Justice.

A quiz of 10 True or False questions contributes to making the information shared memorable and appealing to clerks who serve on the front lines of each court, and are often the main interface between the public and those on the bench.



# VMN COURT REFERRALS TASK FORCE

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT ON BEST  
PRACTICES

JON LAMP, ADR  
PROGRAM SPECIALIST

This year, Jon had the privilege of being a part of the Best Practices Subcommittee of VMN's Court Referrals Task Force. He, along with five others on the Subcommittee, were tasked with identifying best practices for court-referred mediation programs in Virginia's District Courts. After many months of brainstorming, investigating, and editing, the Subcommittee published a report intended for coordinators, mediators, and court staff containing a variety of recommendations and forms.

Early in the process, the Subcommittee noted how wide-ranging the needs and resources are of Virginia's District Courts. Thus, the report contains information and recommendations that are cognizant of these differences.

For example, the report contains information on four different methods of referring cases to mediation, and the pros, cons, and best practices for each. While it isn't feasible to implement each referral method, a program might implement one or two methods depending on their resources and the needs of the parties at their court.

If you are interested, you can find a link to the report on VMN's website at [www.vamediation.org](http://www.vamediation.org), on its Helpful Links page. The Subcommittee hopes the information found in the report is useful for all who are involved in court-referred mediation across Virginia!



# VMN COURT REFERRALS TASK FORCE (CONT.)

OUTREACH TO SELECT GENERAL  
DISTRICT COURTS

DAN WASSINK, DRS  
MANAGER

Now that the subcommittee has completed its stellar work (contact DRS for the report if you cannot access it on the VMN website), it's time to hit the road.

The task force analyzed recent data and identified about a dozen GD courts where an active, robust court-referral program operated before 2020, but where post-COVID referrals to mediation have failed to rebound to previous levels. These courts – large and small - are seen as prime candidates to benefit from the recommendations contained in the subcommittee report.

First up was Lynchburg in District 24. In November, Dan joined Mediation Coordinator Carolyn Fitzpatrick (the Ground Connection Ltd.) and Chesapeake GDC Coordinator Doreene Thomas in a meeting with the Lynchburg Presiding Judge and Clerk of Courts. The task force outreach team presented options for reconfiguring the mediation referral process, but also spent a good portion of the time listening – listening to the local court's needs and challenges and what would work best for them. After all, as the subcommittee report makes clear, “one size does not fit all” and the mediation referral process will inevitably look different in each court.

Just one week following the meeting, Carolyn already reported great progress – not just in Lynchburg, but in the 4 other GD courts she serves in the district. In fact, she is scrambling to train other certified mediators to help her with the already-increasing mediation workload.

The task force meets again in December to assess and learn from the Lynchburg experience, select the next GD court for a personal visit, and assemble a new outreach team from its membership. Stay tuned for further updates.

# RECERTIFICATION UPDATE

MICHAEL BARR,  
ADR ANALYST

In the 2024 cycle, DRS recertified 228 mediators, active at the various court levels. The good news of this recertification season is that the change in how credits can be earned, which placed a limit of four credits on the solo viewing of a video of instruction, was widely followed and adhered to and the update to the Guidelines understood.

One reminder we would take the opportunity to offer pertains to the use of the Mediator Application for CME Course Certification, ADR 2002. This form was introduced in 2018 and is for courses taken that are valuable to your practice but are delivered by out-of-state trainers and/or are otherwise unapproved. While you are encouraged to submit such trainings for credit, it is important to try to complete this form before or soon after the date you take the course. You will then receive an ADR 1010 denoting approval. Since it is a separate review process than that required for recertification, submitting this form at the same time as the recertification ADR 1003, can result in delays.

Need additional information? Please see the DRS webpage on Recertification and FAQs about Recertification. All in all, nice work and may your practice of resolving disputes, dilemmas, conundrums, and court-referred cases find much success and bring peace to parties in dispute until you recertify again!

DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES

# ANNUAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2024

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30TH, 2024

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW  
THE FULL REPORT](#)



### FISCAL YEAR 2024

#### JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES

**26**

JUDGES

**1,046**

CONFERENCES

#### PARENT EDUCATION

**90**

PROVIDERS

**13**

NEW PROVIDERS

#### DISTRICT COURT MEDIATIONS

**9,080**

JDR MEDIATIONS

**1,113**

GDC MEDIATIONS

#### MEDIATION CERTIFICATION

**523**

MEDIATORS

**43**

NEW MEDIATORS

# POST YOUR TRAINING WITH US!

Mediators who would like their courses displayed on the [DRS Training Calendar](#) will now submit the course information via a survey. You may click on the calendar below to access the link. This link will also be included in the email sent to you when your course is approved. If you have any questions, please contact [disputeresolution@vacourts.gov](mailto:disputeresolution@vacourts.gov)





# THANK YOU

*for all you do!*

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## SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

Have an idea for a future article? Submit your ideas to [disputeresolution@vacourts.gov](mailto:disputeresolution@vacourts.gov).  
As always, thank you for all you do for ADR in Virginia.

*Dispute Resolution Services*

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