

WINTER 2022

RESOLUTION

MEDIATION OFFERS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

By Maralise Hood Quan

One of the most powerful systems in democracy is our judicial system that upholds the rule of law. Many people navigate within that system successfully – attorneys, judges, and people with the mental and financial means to approach it with confidence.

In my experience, the people who avoid the judicial system are those who have been harmed by it, those who cannot afford it, and those who fear its repercussions. Data backs that up. A 2015 Access to Justice study by the Washington State Supreme Court showed that civil legal problems are experienced to greater degrees by low-income persons of color, victims of domestic violence, gender discrimination or sexual assault, persons with disabilities, and youth.

As the Director and as a mediator, I see inequity in the Eviction Resolution Pilot Program design every day. When the legislature funded “Right to Counsel” for cases filed in court, the goal was to offer legal representation at the time of litigation and intended to make the process speedier. Landlords and tenants can go to court to resolve their differences in front of a judge.

Yet, for many people going to court is scary and complex. By design, the court process restricts topics for discussion, is adversarial, and is so formal most people need legal representation.

We have seen tenants leave their homes rather than facing their fear of going to court. Some landlords are selling off their properties, ending their dreams of establishing generational wealth because of the fear and cost of going to court.

“We have seen tenants leave their homes rather than facing their fear of going to court.”

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COMING UP

Consider these upcoming opportunities to connect with us:

Basic Mediation Training

March 3, 4, 5, 18 & 19
from 9 AM to 5 PM

MEDIATOR IN-SERVICE:

December Self-Guided Book Review

Check your inbox for more information.

January Mediator In-Service

For certified mediators and practicum participants.

January 12 at 5:30 PM

EQUITABLE ACCESS (CONTINUED)

There is a way to keep these people in their homes with a plan to make landlords whole. Mediation.

Mediation resolves 85% of issues without going to court. It is a crucial element of equitable access to justice.

In the case of eviction resolution, tenants and landlords need legal and financial counsel during the mediation process. That counsel will ground them in their rights and responsibilities, which will enable better dialog and, ideally, resolution that reduces harm to both.

As supporters of dialog and resolution, please join us in asking the legislature to keep mediation as part of the eviction resolution process and fund financial and legal counseling prior to filing in court. The result will make the process more trauma-informed, more equitable, and more efficient.

MEET OUR RECEPTION TEAM!



From left to right: Desiree, Chi, and Kariann

Whether you have a request or are calling to say how awesome we are doing, Desiree, Chi and Kariann are glad to take your call! This team is the front line when it comes to fielding incoming phone calls and requests. Because we are the point of contact for all of Pierce County's eviction dispute resolution needs, we had to create a team to help yield the high volume of calls and over 200 weekly requests – we couldn't handle this volume without them!

THANK YOU FOR ZAZZING WITH US!

Thank you to our sponsors:



The Center set out to hit a \$100,000 fundraising goal for this year's Zazz. With the gracious support of our sponsors and supporters, the Center has grossed over \$120,000!

We are extremely thankful to be able to work together with our community to provide greater equity and access to our services and the knowledge, tools, and skills to find resolution.

WHO ARE THE PEACEMAKERS IN YOUR LIFE?

In our social history, the people closest to those in conflict played a key role in peacemaking. Perhaps it was an elder, an aunt, a close friend, or a spiritual guide who would step in to help resolve conflicts. A trusted ally brought people together to talk and see the other side of the issue.

Those days are long behind us.

“When conflict exists, those around the people in conflict suffer too.”

From those without a home to neighbors arguing about a property line - rarely do we, as a society, work together to overcome those challenges. Instead, we resist the challenge to be vulnerable. We keep to ourselves. We need new guides to aid us in coming together. And that is what makes the Center for Dialog & Resolution such a critical asset in our community.

In 2022, more than 20,000 people requested the Center's services to avoid going to court, to improve communication with people in their lives, to end small claims challenges – to engage in dialog and find resolution. Now, consider how many more than those 20,000 people reap the benefits of conflict resolution from the Center.

When conflict exists, those around the people in conflict suffer too. The children caught in the middle of their parents' disagreements, the family and friends whose loved ones have stopped returning calls because they feel ashamed of not being able to pay their rent – these individuals are also impacted by conflict. In 2023 we expect more conflicts will arise with the end of pandemic-related assistance programs.

Can you imagine how much effort it takes to serve the community? The cost to conduct mediation still outweighs the amount of people able to pay to receive services. From an equity perspective, the Center's goal is access to services for everyone who needs them.

The Center also relies heavily on volunteer mediators to do our work and it is the Center's responsibility to ensure each mediator has the tools, knowledge, and expertise to resolve thousands of conflicts each year. That worthwhile investment costs a lot of money and resources.

Wouldn't it be incredible if our society valued conflict resolution enough that it once again became part of our ethos – where more people had the tools, knowledge, and skills to resolve conflicts, which in turn brought peace to our everyday lives?

The Center for Dialog & Resolution is asking you to support the vision of a Pierce County that values peace, which is the ability to navigate productively through conflict. Our partner foundations have committed to match dollar-for-dollar every new donor or donor who pledges to increase their past donation amounts. By increasing your donation, you are supporting the parents who seek our services to develop parenting plans, landlords and tenants coming together to find solutions, and community members who are willing to mediate conflicts. You are honoring every mediator who donates many hours of their time to make our community more peaceful.

Will you join us?



Scan here
to donate
and join our
peacemaking
mission!