



Dispute Resolution Center
OF THURSTON COUNTY
Civic Harmony Starts Here

The DRC's Legacy

In 2021 the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County (DRC) marked its 30th anniversary. That's a legacy of 30 years of advancing a vision of ***a South Sound community that has and uses healthy and respectful conflict resolution skills*** - 30 years of empowering our neighbors to repair relationships, resolve disagreements, and communicate with respect and civility.

Since its founding in 1991, **more than 200,000 people** have benefitted from the communication, conflict resolution and conflict prevention skills shared and applied by the DRC's ever-growing family of volunteers, partners and advocates.

Dispute Resolution Centers are a Vital Community Resource

Community-based conflict resolution is an essential service. Dispute resolution helps resolve conflict upstream, before it escalates to courts, eviction, violence, or police intervention.

The DRC of Thurston County is one of 21 dispute resolution centers serving communities across Washington State, working collaboratively through their umbrella organization, Resolution Washington.

Dispute Resolution Centers' services strengthen communities, workplaces, and families with solutions that work for each individuals' own needs and increase access to justice.

Local Services & Resources

This DRC serves residents of Thurston and south Mason Counties through a variety of resources for individuals, families, businesses and organizations, and the broader community, to help manage and resolve conflict, to prevent conflict when possible, and to create a more civil and peaceful community. These services include:

- **Mediation** - Our trained and certified mediators serve as impartial facilitators to help people in conflict work toward mutually beneficial agreements.
- **Conflict Resolution Resource Line** - We provide conflict coaching, information and referrals, and arrange face-to-face mediations.
- **Eviction Resolution** - We help to resolve landlord and tenant disputes before they lead to court filings and evictions, at no cost.
- **Group Facilitation** - We help work teams and other groups run orderly and productive meetings, and achieve key goals.
- **Training** - We provide customized training to businesses and organizations to prevent and manage workplace conflict, promote teamwork and improve customer service

- **Youth Empowerment & School Support** - We partner with local schools to offer training and support to help the next generation communicate through conflict
- **Restorative Justice Facilitated Dialogue** - We partner with Thurston County Drug Court to help individuals affected by crime engage in difficult conversations to heal the harms caused.

The DRC's Transformation

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers and staff, and the support of many individual donors, businesses and partner organizations, the DRC has been able to successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and adapt to address new realities and evolving community needs

During this time of challenges and transformation the DRC has:

- Launched the **Eviction Resolution Pilot Program** with our partners across Washington State
- Piloted a **Restorative Justice Facilitated Dialogue** program within our Thurston County DUI/Drug Court;
- Expanded our **services to Spanish-speaking members of our community** with bilingual staff and mediators;
- Trained dozens of volunteers to provide effective and meaningful **online mediation, group facilitation and training**; and
- **Transitioned all of our mediator trainings, public trainings and custom trainings to be given online**, and were selected by the National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) as one of just seven best practice models for online mediation training in the U.S.!

The DRC's Impact

In 2021 the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County:

- **Served a total of 6,439 people** - an increase of 28% over 2019 pre-pandemic levels! - through mediation, conflict coaching, information & referral, group facilitation, training and community presentations;
- **Handled 678 eviction resolution cases**, impacting 1,619 adults and children;
- **Saved local courts - and taxpayers – a total of \$232,500** through Small Claims Court and family mediation; and
- Coordinated the efforts of **more than 160 dedicated volunteers**, including 95 certified mediators, who last year provided 6,974 hours of service to our community.

82% of local mediation cases in 2021 reached some kind of agreement, 84% of clients reported that their situation was improved by mediation, and 90% said they would recommend mediation.

Collectively, Resolution Washington, the network of 21 dispute resolution centers across Washington State, served 73,163 people in 2021.

Opportunity & Investment

Looking ahead, the DRC intends to offer a hybrid of online and in-person services. The transition to providing new resources to our community, and to providing those services in new ways, has been hampered by outdated technology, inadequate space, and limited staff and volunteer resources.

While the DRC has received some short-term emergency funding during the pandemic, a significant investment will be required to ensure long-term sustainability and capacity to serve our community in the coming years.

To ensure it has the capacity to address increasing and evolving community needs, the DRC has undertaken a three-year, \$650,000 effort to make critical investments in Technology, Facilities and People, with the goals of enhancing Service, Access and Equity.

Key results of these investments will include:

- ✓ Dedicated space where clients who lack computer resources or a reliable internet connection can access technology to participate in online mediation.
- ✓ Facilities where training services can be provided both in-person and online to participants from our community, across the state and beyond.
- ✓ Volunteer, staff and client resources that more completely incorporate, reflect and address the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

These critical investments will:

- ✓ Ensure that all members of our community can contribute to, participate in and benefit from the DRC's services, regardless of race, culture, gender, socio-economic status, first language, or access to technology.
- ✓ Enable the DRC to respond to increasing and evolving community needs, as well as new opportunities, in the years to come.

In 2021 - the initial year of this three-year effort – the DRC was able to:

- ✓ Add additional staff to handle the significant increase in calls and cases, including ongoing housing-related services.
- ✓ Begin to make strides to provide more equitable compensation and benefits for staff.
- ✓ Expand into larger space to accommodate growing staff, and to prepare for the return of in-person services and the ability to offer hybrid in-person and online services.
- ✓ Begin to upgrade outdated technology. **Additional technology resources are needed**, however, to fully address mediation and training needs, including resources for clients who lack computer resources and reliable internet connection. This is a key area of focus for 2022 and 2023.

The Importance of Individual & Business Support

While some funding for these capacity-building efforts are being sought from state and local governments, foundations and other sources, **investment by individual contributors and local businesses is critical in making this vision a reality.**

In 2022 the DRC needs to raise \$185,000 from individual and business contributions, building on the positive momentum from 2021 giving, to maintain progress to reach the goal of long-term sustainable capacity to serve our community.

Learn More

For more information on the DRC's capacity-building efforts and ways to support it:

Visit MediateThurston.org/Capacity-Building

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