



Dispute Resolution Center
OF THURSTON COUNTY
Civic Harmony Starts Here

The DRC's Legacy

For more than 32 years, the Dispute Resolution Center has advanced a vision of ***a South Sound community that has and uses healthy and respectful conflict resolution skills*** – that's a legacy of 32 years of empowering our neighbors to repair relationships, resolve disagreements, and communicate with respect and civility.

Since the DRC's founding in 1991, **more than 200,000 people** have benefitted from the communication, conflict resolution and conflict prevention skills shared and applied by the its 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.
- **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 Therapeutic Courts to help individuals affected by crime engage in difficult conversations to heal the harms caused.

The DRC's Impact

In 2022 the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County:

- **Served more than 9,000 people** - an increase of 40% from 2021! - through mediation, conflict coaching, information & referral, group facilitation, training and community presentations;
- **Handled 1,799 eviction resolution cases (compared with 678 cases in 2021)**, impacting 4,682 adults and children;
- **Trained 725 people** in mediation, communication, conflict prevention and conflict resolution skills.
- **Saved local courts - and taxpayers – a total of \$263,250** by providing Small Claims Court and family/parenting plan mediations.

90% of local mediation cases in 2022 reached some kind of agreement, 84% of clients reported that their situation was improved by mediation, and 95% said they would recommend mediation.

Collectively, Resolution Washington, the network of 21 dispute resolution centers across Washington State, served 166,255 people in 2022.

Our Capacity-Building Initiative - Opportunity & Investment

To ensure it has the capacity to address increasing and evolving community needs, in 2021 the DRC undertook a three-year effort to make critical investments in Technology, Facilities and People, with the goals of enhancing Service, Access and Equity.

Key results of these investments 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, location, 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 the first two years of this three-year effort - thanks to the generous financial support and investment of many individuals, local businesses and foundations, as well as short-term state and local government funding - the DRC was able to:

- ✓ 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 in 2023.
- ✓ Begin to upgrade outdated technology.
- ✓ Add additional staff to handle the significant increase in calls and cases, including ongoing housing-related services.
- ✓ Expand resources to Spanish-speaking members of our community, including adding bilingual staff and volunteer mediators.
- ✓ Begin to make strides to provide more equitable compensation and benefits for staff.

Key Capacity-Building Goals for 2023 include:

- ✓ Ensuring that cost is not a barrier to those wishing to participate in our trainings through a new Training Scholarship Fund. Expanding access to training will also make it possible for more community members with an interest in mediation to participate in the training and practicum required to become certified volunteer mediators.
- ✓ Continuing to address critical technology needs, including phone systems, video conferencing resources, network security, software and hardware upgrades, and IT support.

The Importance of Individual & Business Support

While some support for these capacity-building efforts has come from state and local governments, much of this is short-term, temporary funding. **Investment by individual contributors and local businesses is critical to ensuring that the DRC will be able to sustain the initial strides it has made, and will have the resources to address growing and evolving community needs in the years to come.**

Learn More

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

DRC Executive Director Jody Suhrbier, jsuhrbier@mediatethurston.org (360) 956-1155

DRC Community Engagement Mgr. Joe Sanders, jsanders@mediatethurston.org (360) 956-1155