

MCS NEWSLETTER

Mediation & Conflict Solutions



How Do We Measure A Successful Mediation?

ALLAN WITZ, BOARD CHAIRMAN

How do we measure a successful mediation? As mediators, we often determine success by whether the parties signed a mediated settlement agreement. I suggest that a settlement agreement is one measure of success, but there are many others. Here are some examples based on parenting time mediations.

- The parents agree to mediate
- The act of a party entering the mediation room, with all the uncertainties that they are feeling
- The parents are together in the same room
- Signing the Agreement to Mediate
- The direct face-to-face communication by parents who previously only communicated by text and email
- The parents have an opportunity to identify their concerns
- The parents can talk about their children in a neutral environment
- The parents recognize that their children are the direct beneficiaries of the mediation
- When the mediators thank the parents for taking part in the mediation
- When the mediators gently remind the parents of the commitment they are making to their children by engaging in mediation
- When the mediators reinforce the power of the parents to resolve difficult issues

These are just a few examples, and most apply to all mediations. As we reinforce the self-determination of the parties at the start of the mediation, we reinforce the process itself. I encourage our mediators to find success in every step of the mediation process.



STATS WORTH MENTIONING, FROM 2018

- 190 potential mediations were presented to MCS
- 62 of these cases were mediated
- The average fee paid for a mediation was \$24.00
- 96% of clients said they would mediate again, 4% said they might
- MCS had 35 volunteers with a combination of family and civil training
- *2019: as of November 1: 130 cases opened and 60 mediated.*
- *The final stats for 2019 will be available in the spring newsletter.*

MEET AMY HAMILTON: BOARD MEMBER AND SCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR

I've always been interested in the mediation process. MCS was looking for volunteers when I retired. I was, and still am, impressed with the amount of training provided, and I thought I might be good at mediation. I appreciate the fact that the issue is resolved (or not) quickly and relatively cleanly.

I find the school program interesting. I worked almost 30 years with inmates, many of whom entered adult prison as teenagers. I remember one young man who punched a classmate when both were high school freshmen. He thought the incident was simply a fight, but his classmate died as a result of his injuries. He was convicted of First Degree Murder and sentenced to 20 years to life in prison. He still had a mouth full of braces in his admission mugshot. Following several incidents, within a few years he was transferred to the facility at which I worked. He had been a smart, popular athlete in high school and he came from a nice family. By the time I met him, he was an angry lifer, but still just a kid.

I've seen hundreds of examples of how one bad decision can change many lives. I'd like to do what I can to help provide alternatives to this type outcome for the students in our District.

Please consider joining me help others through our efforts in the school program by being part of the School Program Committee - forming in 2020.



Education Update ~

14 volunteers completed training the week of November 11, 2019. 9 new volunteers and 5 previous volunteers who are now family and civilly trained are ready and eager to begin mediating and observing for MCS. Congratulations to each of these volunteers. Thank you for your time and dedication.





Mediation Statewide

In 2017 the six Minnesota Community Dispute Resolution Programs (CDRP's):

1. CMRS, Community Mediation & Restorative Services, New Hope
2. CRC, Conflict Resolution Center, Minneapolis, with satellites in St. Cloud and Duluth
3. DRC, Dispute Resolution Center, St. Paul
4. MCS, Mediation & Conflict Solutions, Rochester
5. MARS, Mediation and Restorative Services, Blaine, and
6. RAMP, Restorative and Mediation Programs, Northfield

came together to form a partnership and a new nonprofit: Community Mediation Minnesota (CMM) which serves as an umbrella organization for CDRP's.

The first large project that CMM members collaborated on was to pursue a Minnesota Supreme Court grant to provide access to mediation services in all 87 Minnesota counties.

Over the preceding two years CMM has created a website

<https://communitymediationmn.org>

as well as a phone line to provide all citizens of Minnesota access to community mediation resources. Outreach materials were created and distributed in all counties, each CDRP was given remote mediation training, a subscription to ZOOM for video conferencing and a technology grant to upgrade hardware for remote mediation technology. CMM recently received another two year Supreme Court grant to upgrade and unify all casework software for all the CDRP's, and we are in the process of creating the new database and optimistically hope to implement it by the beginning of 2020. CMM has monthly meeting which are an opportunity for executive directors to share information and strategies about ADR (alternative dispute resolution) processes.



In an effort to keep mediation volunteers more informed of state and local efforts involving MCS and mediation as a whole, we are pleased to introduce the quarterly MCS Newsletter. If there are particular topics you'd like specifically addressed, please contact your MCS Executive Director.

THANK YOU for your volunteer efforts in 2019!

Wishing each of you a healthy and joy-filled new year.

The MCS Board:

Allan, Wendy, Kay, Mary Jane, Sandy, Wally, Amy and Wendy

