DRS DIALOGUE

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

MEET OUR NEW PARENT EDUCATION COORDINATOR!

TERRY C. DYSICK,
PARENT EDUCATION COORDINATOR

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Greetings!

I am Terry C. Dysick, and I am very glad to be a part of the Dispute Resolution Services team! I have been in association with this organization via mediation services and parent education classes since 2007. I really enjoy opportunities to work with individuals and families and encouraging healthier self-perception and relationships! As a business owner of Guidance Inc., I also offer life coaching, workplace mediation, parent/ child mediation and other educational classes to support emotional and behavior management.

I derived from Hampton, VA where I grew up in a military family until attending Virginia Commonwealth University and majoring in Justice and Risk Administration. I have enjoyed all my experiences under the umbrella of Judicial Services. I've also worked with juvenile delinquents in the juvenile correctional centers and as a cadre, worked in all VA facilities (when there were 7 of them) providing training and reviewing policies. I do believe it takes special people to work with juvenile delinquents in correctional facilities and group homes.

I transferred to the City Department of Juvenile Justice Services and assisted with developing and managing the first Truancy Center for the City of Richmond, working collaboratively with the district courts, schools and social services to provide wrap around services for our clients.
In addition, my background includes Army National Guard, working with sex offenders and providing Sexual Harassment and Assault Reporting Program Services training for E-6 and above in the Army Branch of the Military.

Being athletically inclined is something else I get excited about! I am a big fan of football and basketball and currently teach aquatic exercise and swim lessons for children and adults! I danced for VCU basketball season, when I attended, and as recent as 8 years ago, participated on an adult competitive cheer team!
My love for people and staying active transferred to my three beautiful adult daughters ages 29, 26 and 23; and my three active grandchildren.
I believe in living a prayerful life to its fullest and remaining hopeful and joyful!

HANDLING POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK

GINA WEATHERUP,
CHANTILLY MEDIATION
AND FACILITATION

How do you feel about politics?

As a mediator - like many of you - I'm accustomed to being in situations where tempers heat up but our focus is on creating a new path forward. When it comes to political discussions, perhaps the most difficult part is feeling powerless. And because more and more topics are being politicized, it may be inevitable that a political conversation will come up in your workplace.

So what do you do?

Here are five tips for what to do if you find yourself stuck - either in the argument itself or as an unwilling observer of the argument - dealing with politics at work.

1. Understand that political arguments have a specific cost.

- According to Perceptyx, 4 out of 5 people who have experienced a political conflict at work are actively looking for new jobs.
- Only 3 in 10 employees believe they share similar politics with their direct supervisor.
- If you lead people, you may already be accustomed to watching people withdraw when faced with an argument at work - this may be similar.

2. Know that for many people, "politics" is directly affecting their own lives.

- For example: a discussion about immigration may make someone upset because they are contemplating a family member or close friend who has been, or could be, deported. (This is just one example of many, highly personal issues often deemed "political.")
- This direct, personal connection is a key reason so many people get passionate about politics. It's real people's lives - and it may be their own life, or that of a loved one.

3. Be respectful

- This can look different in different organization, but basically - treat people as the equal-to-you adults they are.
- This tip is as much about your own experiences and those of the observers around you as it is about the person on the other side of the conversation.
- No one wants to work in a place with loud arguments or name-calling.
- You wouldn't be disrespectful if a colleague shared a difficult health diagnosis, even though that's not typical workplace discussion, so treat political topics in a similar manner.

4. Know that you can pause - or end - the conversation anytime.

- For most of us, work is not a place for politics. The substance of our jobs are something else. You're there to do your job, not to have (or observe) this conversation.
- Be honest if you find the conversation upsetting or distracting, and use that moment as an opportunity to pause or end the conversation. Try something like, "Look, the truth is that my beliefs seem to be polar opposites to what you're saying right now. We don't have to agree with each other, but we do both have to work here - so, let's talk about how we want to work together, not what we think of new political policies."

5. Remember: It's about the culture and atmosphere you want to work in.

- In one job, I remember coworkers who liked to say "we're all always co-creating culture all the time."
- There's some truth to this: If you lose your temper at work, it provides permission to others to do so.
- If you embrace respect and active listening, others behave the same way even if they would not otherwise. '
- So if you find yourself dealing with a political argument at work, and you feel intense feelings, pause and take a deep breath - then consider what behaviors would be most helpful in that moment.

Let me know how your next political conversation - or respectful withdrawal from one - at work goes: Send an email to gina@chantillymediator.com

Gina D'Andrea Weatherup founded Chantilly Mediation and Facilitation to help leaders create happier, more compassionate workplaces. Gina is a CEO, certified mediator, and a certified "Happiness at Work" practitioner

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http://www.chantillymediationandfacilitation.com/
https://blog.perceptyx.com/political-conflict-at-work-drives-employees-to-quit-perceptyx-study-finds

OFFICIAL PARENT EDUCATION POLICIES TAKE EFFECT

MICHAEL BARR, ADR ANALYST

In 2023, when the legislature renewed the authority for the Parent Education (PE) program to be vested in the Office of the Executive Secretary (OES), and managed by Dispute Resolution Services, the need arose for clear policies. Over the course of 2024, then-PE coordinator, Ann Warshauer, worked closely with the rest of the staff at DRS to devise the Official Policies for Parent Education Seminars in Virginia. This policy document is the result of monthly internal meetings, mild disputes(!), and detailed revision, all to integrate the Commonwealth-wide mandate on courts with the practicalities of providing programmatic quality control for over 100 current seminar providers and finetune the instructor approval process.

The broader vision for the Parent Education Program in Virginia, and the goal to serve divorcing or separating parents for the benefit of their children, is outlined in House Document 26, and the legal requirements found in Va. Code §§ 16.1-278.15 and 20-103. The policies are divided into three key areas: the procedure to be approved as a provider with DRS; the responsibilities and duties that pertain to providers and to instructors, when those are different; and the contents of an approved curriculum. It opens with a definition of terms and closes with a section on how the public can register any complaints.

An area that may be new (or potentially confusing) is the difference drawn between parent education seminar "Providers" and "Instructors." In the past, these terms were synonymous as DRS could not track instructors beyond the providers that sought to be approved with the individual courts. Now, instructors of the course may also be providers, but not all providers are instructors; some providers are only the organization to which an instructor belongs.

In general, the policies are guidelines - they provide accountability to those that offer the seminars, aim to ensure fairness and uniformity to process of approval, and advise on the substantive content of their instruction. We welcome your engagement on the subjects and hope you will find them valuable to your practice.

Save the Date!

PARENT EDUCATORS SYMPOSIUM

04	25	25
MONTH	DAY	YEAR

Dispute Resolution Services
Department of Judicial Services
Office of the Executive Secretary
parenteducation@vacourts.gpv
(804) 692-0375 (Phone)

Virginia Public Safety Training Center
7093 Broad Neck Road
Hanover, VA 23069
Knox Hall

The Symposium is prepared to offer qualitative insight in the direction of supporting parents who are challenged with children who resist visitation with the other parent. As always, we will share experiences and conversations to enhance our professional delivery. The professional panel shall be all ears waiting to hear our questions and prepared to offer interests and suggestions to better equip referred parents to succeed. In addition, the New Parent Education Coordinator is excited to share her goals and objectives targeting unification and growing everyone's program!

Registration for this event will begin at 8:00AM

EXPLORING EVAL REVISIONS

JON LAMP, ADR PROGRAMS SPECIALIST

As public employees, we at DRS take seriously our charge to ensure parties in Virginia's courts have access to high-quality mediation services.

One of the most important tools DRS has for monitoring mediation program quality is the ADR-1002 Evaluation of Mediation Session(s) and Mediator(s). The ADR-1002 is essentially an exit survey which mediators are required to distribute to all parties referred from court, and is the primary method by which our office collects feedback from mediation participants.

As reported in our 2024 Fiscal Year Report, of the around 570 evaluations we entered for FY2024 mediations, 93% indicated that the mediation process was either very or somewhat helpful, and 92% indicated that they would recommend mediation to others. This data and the comments recorded on the evaluations form a vital component of our mediation program monitoring process.

92% of people responding would reccommend mediation to others

The mediation ecosystem in Virginia has changed a lot since the 1002 form was introduced in the early 2000s, though, and many mediators have raised the need for updates to stay relevant with these changes. In response, our office has been working for over a year to revise the form to make it more accessible for parties. We have developed a draft survey with streamlined, clearer questions, as well as an online survey version of the form accessible for remote participants and those who would prefer to take the survey home.

We want to make sure this revised survey is meeting the goals we set for it before officially publishing it. Several coordinators in GDC and JDR courts have volunteered to test our latest draft through a pilot program that is set to end in late spring/early summer of 2025. Depending on the results reported by these volunteers, we are hopeful we can share the new form and process with mediators soon!

DRS IN THE FIELD

"Back to School"

DAN WASSINK, DRS MANAGER

I continue to vicariously re-live my college days, while also spreading the good word about mediation.

On February 25, at the invitation of Donita King, Adjunct Professor of Mediation, I spoke to about a dozen students at the University of Richmond Law School. Following an introduction to the work and goals of the Dispute Resolution Services division, and after touting the overall benefits of mediation to litigants and local courts, I appealed to the students' 'future selves.'

As I pointed out, an attorney's ultimate goal should be to act in the best interests of their clients. Mediation satisfies those interests by providing a safe and non-adversarial space, and ample time, in which to explore creative solutions that can give parties at least some of what they need. I also emphasized the ways attorneys can assist the mediation process to enhance the chances of reaching an agreement.

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School of Law™

What was supposed to be a 40-minute presentation turned into a discussion of more than one hour, thanks to the many insightful comments and questions from students. At least two of the students plan to seek mediator certification from DRS in the near future.

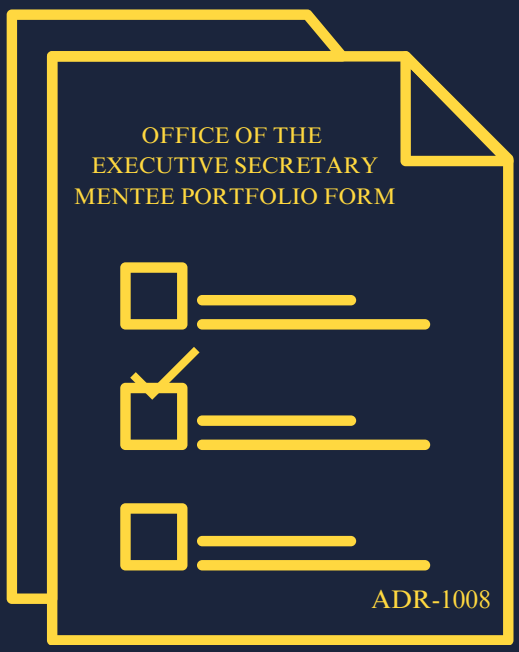
My visit to the University of Richmond campus followed two other presentations last Fall - one at a Christopher Newport University pre-law class, and one at the William and Mary Law School.

Source: cropped-UR-Icon.png | University of Richmond Law Review

MENTORSHIP FORMS REVISION

MICHAEL BARR, ADR ANALYST

Based on a survey that some of you received last August, DRS has formed a committee to review the primary forms used to evaluate new mentees that wish to become certified mediators in Virginia. For all with acquaintance of the Mentee Portfolio Form (ADR 1008) and the Mentee Evaluation Form (ADR 1001), these instruments are the essential means by which certified mentors record their experience of working with a mentee, and that person's skill to be a certified mediator, with us here at DRS. Since we have no first-hand experience of anyone's ability as a mediator, the informed perspective, and evaluative guidance of the mentor, is the basis of understanding that permits DRS to give its 'yes,' 'no,' or 'after we receive a little more information' to each applicant.



The forms, in use since 2007, have successfully allowed the approval of over a thousand mediators and are appended to the Mentorship Guidelines. They were developed out of prior evaluation forms created in 1999. The purpose of the committee is to improve their functionality by addressing a few common problems, noted in the survey results. These goals are, as follows: 1) to examine overlap between the forms and simplify; 2) to decide if the means of measurement, the Likert Scale, is still the best way of gauging and communicating a mentor's assessment of a mentee; 3) to reduce the time it takes for mentors to complete (an average of 1-2 hours); and 4) to query if the mentee should have more of a role in the formal documentation of their own learning.

Research on how adults learn over the past couple decades has revealed that evaluation is most effective when students clearly understand how they are being assessed. From the 'sage on the stage,' to the 'guide on the side,' DRS believes the forms should reflect this kind of relationship between the mentor and mentee. Further, the rubric used to assess mentees must be robust enough to reflect mentee development, something that is difficult to discern with the current scoring system, i.e. numerical answers to 53 questions. Any revision of the forms will need to be approved by the Judicial Council of Virginia, and more importantly, will follow feedback we will solicit from all mediators. Stay tuned for updates by early summer.

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

As always, thank you for all you do for ADR in Virginia.