



DRS DIALOGUE

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

UPDATE: JSVS ENHANCEMENTS

Last Summer, we told you about pending enhancements to the Juvenile Secure Viewing System (JSVS). Many of our Mediation Coordinators who serve Juvenile and Domestic Relations (JDR) courts rely on JSVS to obtain critical case information that allows them to do their jobs effectively.

While some of the system enhancements sought by JDR Coordinators, and approved by the JDR Court Services team, remain in pending status, we are happy to report that at least one of them has been completed!

As of March 4, the Name and Base Case search results tables have been modified to include new data.

Dan Wassink,
DRS Manager

When conducting a search, Coordinators will now be able to view the hearing time and the initials of the judge. This information was not readily available previously, requiring Coordinators to take additional steps to obtain it.

Three other JSVS enhancements remain on the JDR Court Services team's 'to-do' list.

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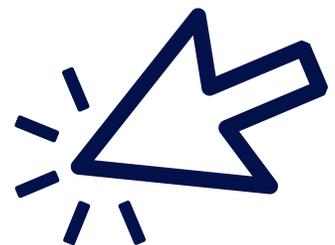
If all goes as planned, this Summer or Fall Coordinators reviewing cases on the child support docket will no longer need to look at each case individually to determine whether the Division of Child Support Services (DCSE) is involved. The search results tables will clearly indicate if a DCSE reference number has been assigned.

Further down the road, the JDR Court Services team remains hopeful that the Order Of Referral and Mediator Appointment form for Custody, Visitation and Support Cases (DC-604) can be modified to include contact information for the parties (unless confidentiality is indicated).

Finally, it is possible that JSVS can be modified to alert Coordinators if one or more parties will require a language interpreter. However, this enhancement is on the back burner for now due to its complexity and other priorities requiring the attention of our legal and technical teams.

DRS wishes to thank JDR Court Services Manager Christi Eads and her team for their cooperation and efforts on behalf of the mediation community!

JSVS



COORDINATOR CONTRACT SEASON STARTS SOON!

Jon Lamp,
ADR Program Specialist

In Virginia's District Courts, parties to appropriate cases referred by the court may mediate with a certified mediator at no cost. Here at DRS, we consider mediation to be an invaluable service for improving parties' access to justice, and a helpful tool for courts to manage their docket. Close to 65% of invoices for mediation services in the 2025 fiscal year reported an agreement on some or all issues, and 85% of parties (+/-4%) thought mediation was very appropriate for their case according to client evaluations our office received. These programs do not happen out of nowhere, though, and are made possible through the dedicated efforts of the certified mediators that assist the parties and the courts that refer the cases.

In many courts, these mediation programs would also not be possible without the services of the mediation coordinators that support them. Not only do these coordinators reduce the workload of clerk's offices with active mediation programs, but they also serve an important role as program liaison - interfacing between local stakeholders like the court, mediators, and parties to answer questions, set mediation program policies, manage mediator rosters, and more. To expand parties' access to ADR across the Commonwealth, the Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) contracts with vendors to serve as mediation coordinators each year. Currently, OES has contracts with 24 mediation coordinators, covering over 100 court mediation programs.

Are you interested in coordinating a mediation program in a court near you? Each spring, our office solicits applications from those looking to become a coordinator. We will be sending a message to all mediators and current coordinators in the coming weeks with information on how to apply for a contract. Until then, we recommend you get in contact with the court whose program you wish to coordinate to discuss how you may be able to assist them. All OES coordinator contracts require the approval of the local court before they can be entered.

Please note: You do not need a coordinator contract to mediate cases. There can be only one coordinator per court mediation program, but there may be courts that are looking for a new or additional mediator to add to their roster.

EVALUATING MEDIATOR EVALUATIONS

Jon Lamp,
ADR Program Specialist

In 2025, DRS designed a new version of the ADR-1002 Evaluation of Mediator(s) and Mediation Session(s) form, the exit survey that is distributed to mediation participants. These changes include:

- Fewer, more focused questions,
- An online version of the questions for remote parties,
- A QR code for in-person parties, and more

Over the summer, several mediators and mediation coordinators participated in a pilot program designed to test these potential changes and to collect information about response rates. We are now using the data and feedback received through the pilot to guide our next steps, looking at how the form can be improved and implemented.

Our thanks to all the mediators and coordinators that participated in this pilot program! Keep an eye out for more about this project in the coming months!

WE WANT CONFLICTS - REALLY

Christine Poulson,
Executive Director of Resolution
Virginia

Over the past 16 months, Virginia's community mediation center staff have invited law enforcement in and around Fairfax, Warrenton, Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg and Roanoke to refer people in conflict to center mediation, conciliation, restorative justice or conflict exploration services. The goal of the federally-funded Police-Referred Mediation Pilot Project is to see if a partnership between law enforcement and community mediation centers can:

1. Decrease reliance on law enforcement to manage low-level disputes
2. Give law enforcement personnel a useful resource to share with people in conflict, and
3. Reduce repeat calls for service to law enforcement for same issue



Mediator Brady Jones from NVMS Conflict Resolution Center goes out on patrol with members of the Vienna Police Department to see the types of conflicts that can be referred to center services.

The ultimate goal of the project is to enable peaceful people, families and communities.

This project was piloted in a limited way in 2019 Staunton, VA and results were promising. People who had been in conflict for weeks (or years) resolved their disputes and improved their relationships. Evaluators from Virginia Tech's Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention found that, although the sample size was small, those who received center services were significantly less likely to re-engage law enforcement for the same issue.

The project continues through September 2027. To help with this project or other community mediation center work, please be in touch with one of the centers listed below:

- Bridge Institute (Roanoke and surrounding area) ph. 540-552-1200
- Fairfield Center (Central Shenandoah Valley) ph. 540-434-0059
- Greater Richmond Community Mediation Center (Richmond, Petersburg and surrounding area) ph. 804-720-0715
- Mediation Center of Charlottesville (Charlottesville and surrounding area) ph. 434-977-2926
- NVMS Conflict Resolution Center (Fairfax and surrounding area) ph. 703-865-7272
- Peaceful Alternatives Community Mediation (Amherst and surrounding area) ph. 434-929-8224
- Piedmont Peace Center (Warrenton and Upper Piedmont) ph. 540-347-6650

This project is supported by Grant No. 14142965 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime and the SMART Office.

DRS IN THE FIELD

JUDICIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM 2026

The Judicial Management Program Conference is hosted each year by the OES Department of Educational Services, and on March 17th, members of DRS will share the stage to inform, educate, and encourage the participation of new clerks joining the ranks of Virginia courts.

Dan will discuss the scope of our programs, the benefits of integrating mediation into case flow management, and key reasons for courts to be involved. Terry will help the clerks memorize the authorizing code for mediation (okay, not really) and share the value of the co-parenting seminars mandated for parties in contested family cases.

Michael Barr,
ADR Analyst

JUDICIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Michael will mix things up with a true-false quiz (to see who is listening) and explain how ADR fits into the court's goal to provide all parties Access to Justice in the Commonwealth.

DRS IN THE FIELD

(CONT.)

Jordan Blackstone,
DRS Assistant

“HIT THE ROAD, JACK!”

Spring is upon us and DRS is preparing to hit the road for the 2026 Judicial Settlement Conference (JSC) Meeting of Retired Judges.

This year finds us traveling to the beautiful Star City of Roanoke to meet at the annual Judicial Conference of Virginia. Though it's nice to take in the rarefied air and lush mountain landscape, what our office most looks forward to is the chance to hear from our recall judges about the state of the JSC program.

Each year, we set aside this time to brief the judges on internal developments, policy changes, and new statistics on the program's effectiveness. We're excited to meet with both veteran and newly-minted JSC judges this year - gleaning their insight on ways that JSC can be improved, and continue serving citizens of the Commonwealth.

KEEPIN' UP WITH THE COORDINATORS

Jordan Blackstone,
DRS Assistant

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to run a mediation program!” (or something like that).

We'll be meeting with our “village” of coordinators next month to talk about all things mediation in their various courts. If you are a coordinator, please note that these will be separate, virtual meetings on April 8th and 9th at 3:00PM for GDC and JDR, respectively.

If you have not received a WebEx invitation, please contact our office for assistance.

See you soon!

PARENT EDUCATION

Terry Dysick,
Parent Education Coordinator

COMMUNITY INFO SESSIONS



Opportunities for court approved parent education providers to present educational webinar topics have been a great success! They are referred to as Community Info Sessions and they started October 16th, and we are booked through December 2026. Each session consisted of 12-18 participants and I'm expecting it to continue to increase!

Symposium 2025 yielded expressed interest in having interim learning opportunities for networking and individual program enhancements. Feedback supported updated tools for working with and supporting co-parents, children and their access to resources. Topics have included:

- How to Identify Resources in the Community
- Coping with Grief and Loss During the Holidays
- Addressing and Advocating for Children with Special Needs
- Fatherhood Support Systems
- Supporting Children Academically in Accordance with School Policies
- I-Messages vs Accusatory Statements
- Impact of Stress & Trauma and ACES
- Emotional Intelligence and Dealing with a Narcissist.

The sessions are open to all disciplines and community partners that are working in the field as well. The Community Info Sessions are held on the 1st Tuesday and the third Thursday of each month from 2:00 PM until 3:30 PM. CME credit is sometimes available for topics that are determined to be relevant to mediation.

PARENT EDUCATION

(CONT.)

Terry Dysick,
Parent Education Coordinator

SYMPOSIUM 2026

Our next Parent Education Symposium will be held May 15th, 2026. We are looking forward to discussing opportunities for seminar providers to be available to first responders and social services when attending court with parents challenged with parenting skills and/or domestic violence issues. We are expecting a panel of JDR judges, police personnel, and a social services director to help explore this collaborative opportunity.

Additionally, we will have a presenter from DCSE's Family Engagement Services sharing programs which support payors with employment, substance abuse, and other issues interfering with payment obligations. Attendees will also be enlightened regarding challenges working with the Hispanic population.

BROCHURES

We are excited to announce we have finalized and published the first and informative brochure specifically for Parent Education! Providers and community partners have already seized the opportunity to place their orders free of charge!

The brochure highlights the importance and value of parent education seminars:

- Effects of Separation and Divorce on Children
- Financial Responsibilities
- Healthy Communication Skills
- Conflict Resolution Strategies and more essential topics.

It provides information on how to access in-person or virtual seminars.

As the number of caring providers increase, we aim to be supportive of material that will continue to support their seminars and encourage judges to refer custody and visitation cases to parent education seminars. The hope is that classes will be taken prior to mediation so that parents/caretakers can be more knowledgeable and equipped to discuss a plan in the best interest of the child(ren).

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.

