



CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG  
**COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Dispute Settlement Program  
*An Alternative to Court*



## Welcome & Introduction

### Community Relations

- Integral part of the human relations support system for the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County for over 50 years
- Works to enhance community harmony and promote Charlotte's growing cultural diversity
- Provides training to increase education and awareness around diversity, equity and inclusion; implicit bias and conflict resolution




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**Our Mission**

Community Relations empowers, collaborates, engages and promotes opportunities to create positive outcomes.

**Our Vision**

Be recognized as a global model in building community harmony by advocating for diversity, equity and access for all.

## Dispute Settlement Program (DSP)

- Since 1983, DSP has been providing mediation and conciliation services for the residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg for the following types of cases:
  - Landlord tenant
  - Neighbor Disputes
  - Misdemeanor criminal complaints via Private Warrant Court
  - 50-C No Contact Orders
  - Medicaid Appeals
  - Consumer Merchant Issues
  - School Issues/Truancy
  - Employer/Employee Relations
  - Self – Referrals (civic organizations, churches, roommates, etc.)
- DSP **DOES NOT** handle cases involving Separation or Divorce, Child Custody, Felony Offenses or Domestic Violence



## Case Referral Sources

- DSP receives approximately 1,600 – 2,000 referrals per year from the following partners:
  - District Court Judges
  - District Attorney's Office
  - Public Defender's Office
  - Magistrates Office
  - Local Attorneys
  - Landlords and/or Tenants
  - Home Owner Associations
  - Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department
  - Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
  - INLIVIAN (formerly Charlotte Housing Authority)
  - Office of Administrative Hearings
  - City and County Human Resources
  - Residents of Charlotte Mecklenburg



## What is Mediation?

- Mediation is a voluntary process where two or more disputing parties use the assistance of a neutral third party (the mediator) to assist them in coming up with a resolution that will be mutually satisfactory to both parties.
- The mediator opens the lines of communication and gives each party an opportunity to talk about the issue, their interests, needs and wants.
- The mediator seeks to find commonalities between what each party has discussed and then walks the parties through a brainstorming process
- The mediator helps the parties evaluate the options they have identified and then writes up any agreement that has been reached.

Guides

Neutrality

Facilitates

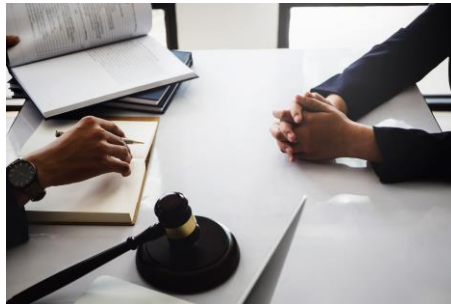
## Landlord Tenant Mediation

- Offers opportunities for tenants and landlords to eliminate communication barriers
- Offers opportunities for tenants and landlords to work together to solve problems with:
  - Rent Issues
  - Security Deposits
  - Living Conditions
  - Property Damage
  - Financial assistance for repairs
  - Miscellaneous conflicts stemming from the landlord-tenant relationship



## Ban Hearings

- INLIVIAN (formerly The Charlotte Housing Authority), viewing Community Relations as an impartial third party, requested that CRC hear cases that are eligible for a hearing
- Ban Hearings: Offers an opportunity for tenant complaints to be heard and acted upon:
  - By an unbiased panel
  - In an appropriate period of time
  - In a fair manner



## Creation of Private Warrant Court

- DSP has always received cases from district court, however, the Judge would set aside appropriate cases and DSP staff would pick up those cases and schedule them for mediation at a later date and time and then update the court on the status.
- In efforts to expedite the process, DSP staff began a pilot of going into courtrooms and offering mediation services. This process was slow and many of the cases on the docket were not appropriate for mediation however word got out about the program.
- DSP held collaborative meetings with key court personnel and with legislative changes, the pilot culminated in what is now Private Warrant Court.
- Private Warrant Court is held every Monday in Courtroom 4330.

## Creation of 50C- No Contact

- Due to the success of Private Warrant Court, a District Court Judge approached DSP about setting up a court to mediate 50-C cases.
- The program offers individuals who are seeking a 50C no contact order but do not meet the criteria for such an order, an opportunity to sit down and discuss their concerns and come up with options that will address their needs and help them come to an understanding of how they can co-exist and act civilly with one another in the future.
- 50-C No Contact Mediations are held every Tuesday in Courtroom 6330.



## Benefits of Mediation for Disputants

- Provides disputants an opportunity to make their own decisions
- Offers disputants an opportunity to talk openly and have questions answered
- Can be an avenue for paying restitution for damages or losses
- Is an alternative to court conviction or other court action
- Conducted in a safe space
- It is confidential with a few exceptions (child abuse or neglect allegations, threats of harm made to a party in the mediation or someone outside of the mediation process, abuse or neglect of a disabled adult would all have to be divulged to the proper authority)
- Saves time from having to go back and forth for court proceedings

## Cost Savings to the Court System

Mecklenburg County District Court conducted a study where they found that for every case that is mediated, the court saves two hours of time and the taxpayers save \$200 per case.

### **Trends from FY2015-FY2019**

- Processed **17,500 referrals** for mediation
- **78% of cases were successfully resolved**
- Savings of **\$1,582,600** in court costs
- **15,826** hours in court time saved
- Expedites more serious cases through the criminal justice system



## Cost Savings via Volunteers

- DSP has over 75 trained volunteer mediators who assist DSP staff with mediating and conciliating case referrals.
- According to the Independent Sector, in 2019 for every hour that a volunteer gives back to the community is a savings of \$25.43 per hour.
- In 2019, our volunteers provided 3,970 hours of service which is a savings of \$100,957.



