

Community Mediation Twelve-Point Model

Serving Communities

1. Provide mediation and conflict resolution services for a range of community needs.

Community mediation centers best serve their communities by providing conflict resolution services that address a wide array of issues, for example, in housing, consumer, family, neighborhood, peer/youth, and workplace issues. By doing so, centers can address the diverse conflict needs identified within and by their communities while satisfying programmatic requirements imposed by funding sources. In addition to mediation, center services may include restorative practices, conflict coaching, and specialized services for complex disputes.

2. Establish collaborative community relationships with other service providers to meet the needs of communities.

Community mediation centers generate the most impact in meeting the needs of communities by adopting a comprehensive approach that leverages resources available in the community. By collaborating and partnering with other community organizations to learn about and address the needs of the communities, centers can more effectively serve those needs, and in doing so, help to empower the communities served.

3. Offer outreach and learning opportunities about mediation and conflict resolution to communities.

The mission of community mediation includes empowering people in the community by sharing knowledge about and providing resources on different ways to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. As people learn about mediation and other conflict resolution services through outreach and learning opportunities, they are more likely to have access to and use the services. Sharing learning opportunities and outreach can serve to build positive social relationships while increasing community capacity for conflict resolution and reducing violence.

4. Involve community members in center governance and center development (including fundraising) as staff, volunteers, board members, and partners.

Community mediation centers thrive when they are strongly supported by and involved in the communities they serve. Such support will be promoted by obtaining funding from and partnering with a variety of community and other sources and by the participation of community members in the center. Examples of community sectors include government, neighborhood coalitions, business, education, healthcare, social services, philanthropy, arts, sports, trade/professional organizations, religious organizations, finance, and technology sectors. Furthermore, centers that apply collaborative problem-solving and other conflict management strategies to their own personnel issues and decision-making processes will advance effective center governance.

Providing Accessible Services

5. Provide mediation and conflict resolution services at no cost or on a sliding scale.

Community mediation centers serve the community by providing affordable community mediation and conflict resolution services to all segments of the population. When sliding scale fees are charged, the ability to pay is considered.

6. Deliver mediation and other conflict resolution services in settings convenient to participants including accessible venues and remote options.

Centers build community and facilitate community involvement by making mediation sites available across their communities. As a result, dispute resolution services become more accessible to community members, and centers become an integral part of communities. Having sufficiently numerous community sites accommodates a greater number of community members. Community locations that are welcoming, safe and accessible, like libraries and community centers, are necessary. Additionally, remote service delivery options may provide accessible alternatives for parties and expand the ability of centers to serve broader geographic areas.

7. Schedule mediation and conflict resolution services at a time convenient to the participants.

Making community mediation services available at the broadest range of times possible respects participants' convenience, increases accessibility of services and broadens use.

8. Provide mediation and conflict resolution services at any stage in a dispute - including the early use of such services for conflict prevention and collaborative problem-solving.

Community mediation centers best serve their communities by providing access to a wide range of services at all conflict stages. Centers aim to meet people's needs where they are, including handling conflict at its earliest stages through prevention, planning, and problem-solving approaches in addition to mediation. Examples include conflict management skill building, facilitation, restorative practices around community building, collaborative planning, and conflict coaching. Once conflict occurs, services are offered in response to those needs regardless of whether the referral comes from an agency, the court, or the community or the disputants themselves. Where conflict is escalated, intense, and/or challenging, centers can provide practitioners experienced and trained in advanced conflict resolution skills, trauma and harm. Examples include juvenile diversion, gang violence interruption, minor criminal assault and violence cases, re-entry, and contentious divorce/parenting cases.

Providing Quality

9. Maintain high quality mediation and conflict resolution services by providing comprehensive skills-based training, apprenticeships, continuing education, and ongoing evaluation of volunteer mediators and other practitioners.

The success of community mediation depends on providing high quality services. Community mediation centers can motivate and provide opportunities for volunteer mediators and other practitioners to continuously improve their mediation and conflict resolution skills. Effective mediator capacity and skill building includes basic and advanced mediation and conflict resolution skills training, apprenticeships, and continuing education. Ongoing feedback and evaluation of practitioners as well as opportunities for reflective practice will help build community confidence in the services offered and make community mediation a trusted resource. Training, professional development, and continuing education opportunities are investments in community practitioners and help develop approaches to quality that are inclusive and welcoming to all.

Reflecting Diversity

10. Build the capacity of community members, who reflect the diversity of the community, to serve as center mediators and other conflict resolution practitioners.

The connection between the community mediation center and the community it serves is strengthened when the center's staff, community practitioners, and trainees reflect all the diversity in the community.

A sense of shared ownership with the community and the center develops, and community support is increased. Centers demonstrate commitment to diversity through training and outreach efforts, including knowledge sharing and partnership- building, which help make centers accessible to community members in serving as mediators, volunteers, staff, board members, and as organizational partners/funders.

11. Provide mediation, education, and conflict resolution services to all segments of the community and strive to increase their inclusion in conflict resolution services.

Conflict is pervasive throughout society, and people in need of conflict resolution services are to be found in all segments of the community. In order to meet the community's needs, community mediation centers work to ensure that no part of their community is denied their services and that ongoing efforts are made to engage with underserved communities and to remove barriers to center services.

12. Deliver mediation and conflict resolution services for community-based disputes that come from a wide variety of referral sources.

Individuals involved in conflict may seek help from a number of resources in the community. In an effort to reach out to these disputants, community mediation centers cultivate a broad network of referral agents in their community such as community organizations, police, faith-based institutions, courts, community members, and government agencies to avoid dependence on any single referral source and to serve those who are currently underserved. Consequently, the center's services become available to a greater number of community members and the center's community ties are reinforced.