

Conflict Resolution in the Workplace

We are here today because

- A decade or more of budget and staff cuts, resulted in a climate of frustrated and battle-weary DNR employees.
- Morale has plummeted and many have reverted to a survival mode mentality.
- Supervisor training was cut long ago from budgets.

We are here today because

- DNR's Office of Fair Practices realized a growing number of conflicts were not being resolved.
- OFP worked with the Mediation And Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) to get a grant for **Workplace Mediation** at DNR.

Accomplishments

- Mediation Program Planning Team Organized
- RFPs for training vendors.
- Additional funding received from MACRO and DNR.
- The Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution trained a team of twenty employees as mediators.

Accomplishments

- Hosted a graduation and pilot program kickoff in March.
- Received intakes and performed mediations.

The Goal

- The goal of workplace mediation is to provide every DNR employee with the opportunity to take a more active role in successfully resolving his or her own conflicts in a personal, informal and non-threatening manner.

What is ADR?

- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is an umbrella term for processes that allow parties to play an active role in resolving conflicts and promote creative win-win solutions.

Mediation is one ADR process

- ADR processes, which are guided by a trained neutral, include:
 - Mediation,
 - Community conferencing,
 - Settlement conferences,
 - Early neutral case evaluation,
 - Facilitation and
 - Consensus building.

What is mediation?

- Mediation is a process in which a trained neutral person, a "mediator," helps people in a dispute to:
 - Communicate with one another,
 - Understand each other, and if possible,
 - Reach agreements that satisfy everyone's needs.

Why mediation?

- Provides an assisted communication tool to:
 - Address past sources of conflict.
 - Enable the future relationship.
- Provides appropriate solutions.
- Provides the longest-lasting solutions.
- Increases workforce morale.

It is respectful

- It is confidential
- Provides an outlet to air grievances privately
- Focuses on common interests and goals
- Participants determine the outcome

It is respectful yet realistic

- Acknowledges the past.
- Encourages parties to develop options.
- Tests options to see if they are realistic.
- Clarifies and defines common goals.
- Results in (written) agreements.
- Teaches by example that conflicts can and should be resolved.

Advantages of mediation

- Opens an avenue to capture informal conflicts.
- Adaptable framework to solve team-building problems.
- Encourages problem-solving rather than risk-avoidance.

Advantages of mediation

- Suggests trying different ways to communicate.
- Teaches participants to really listen.
- Furthers the concept of consensual agreements.
- Results in concrete agreements with action plans.

Mediation can be useful when

- Two coworkers reach an impasse which begins to affect the whole office.
- What you usually use isn't working.
- When communication shuts down.
- When you or a coworker lose sleep because of a dispute at work.

Try Mediation when

- Progressive discipline seems like the next step but you'd like an alternative.
- You need a new approach.
- You want to repair a broken workplace relationship.
- Your supervisor, coworker or your subordinate is not hearing you.

Where are we with the pilot?

- We are at the beginning.
- We are seeking your ideas and guidance.
- As leaders you can make mediation and other conflict management practices a part of the DNR culture.

Next Steps

- Would you encourage your staff to try it?
- Are you personally willing to try it?
- How can we use this resource?
- How can this help your unit?
- How should we spread the word?
- How can we help you promote conflict resolution to DNR?

Why now?

- DNR is reinventing itself.
- Our future is directly linked to the effectiveness and strength of our teams.
- Good conflict management is critical to sustaining successful teams.
- DNR must **not only survive** these challenging times but **grow and thrive** in order to serve the people of Maryland.

Your support is needed

- Please review the resource materials.
- Think about the situations mediation could help with in your group.
- Discuss ideas on how we should proceed with a planning team member or send comments to Richard Allen before **Friday September 7th.**

Thank you for your time
and attention.