

March 2026

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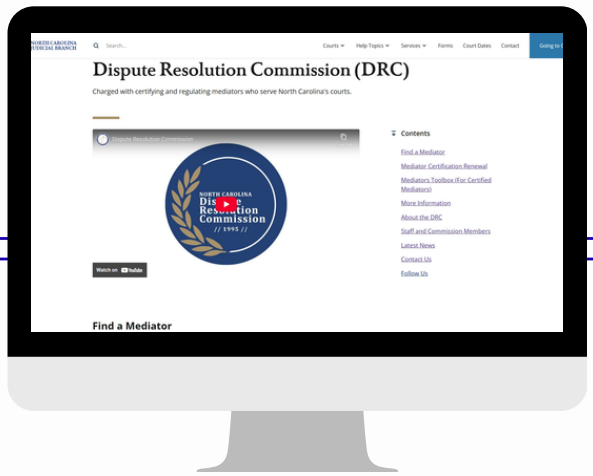
MARCH UPDATES

It is spring here at the DRC and we are springing into action with new accessible website content! The U.S. Department of Justice has issued a final rule on accessibility for online content called the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) which means all of our online content needs to be brought into compliance with these new rules by **April 24, 2026.**

We have been super busy making these edits and making sure all documents we produce adhere to these new rules and are accessible to everyone we serve.

This means that some of our website content may have moved or might look a little different.

If you are looking for a specific document and cannot locate it **(Advisory Opinions, Policies, Guidelines, Guides)** on our website (www.NCDRC.gov) please just email or call us at DRCMediators@nccourts.org or give us a call, (919) 890-1415 we will send it directly to you.



Newly Adopted Advisory Opinions

At the Dispute Resolution Commission Meeting on March 6, 2026 the following Advisory Opinions were adopted:

Revised AO 43 **Mining Metadata and Recording the Conference, Rule 4 and the Use of Artificial Intelligence During a Remote Mediation;** and

Revised AO 39 **A Mediator's Duty, Rule 6**

Also during the Dispute Resolution Commission Meeting on March 6, 2026 the following updates to guidelines were adopted:

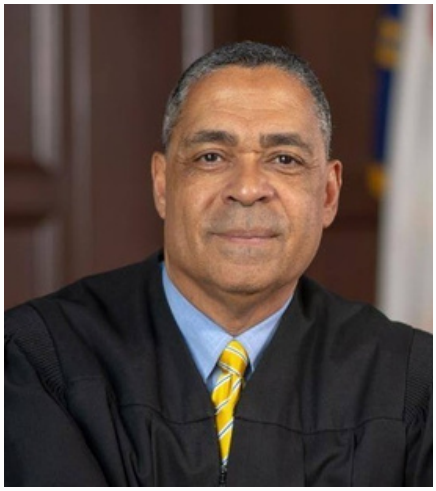
FFS and MSC 40-Hour Training Guidelines: the Commission adopted changes to the guidelines to allow for 30 attendees for remote courses.

Observer Conduct Guidelines: the Commission adopted changes to the guidelines to allow for a minimum of two live observations for non-attorney applicants instead of three.

The Commission also welcomed two new Commissioners, please join us in welcoming Judge Justin Davis and Judge Reuben Young!

Judge Young was appointed to the Court of Appeals for the State of North Carolina and was a Special Superior Court Judge for the North Carolina Administrative Offices of the Court. He was recently the Civil Bureau Chief for the North Carolina Department of Justice and Chief Legal Counsel for the Office of the Governor from 2003 to 2008, having served as Deputy Legal Counsel from 2001 to 2003. He previously represented the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety as Associate Counsel for the North Carolina Department of Justice and served as Secretary for both the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public safety, and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. His other appointments include Homeland Security Advisor for North Carolina, Member of the Governor's Crime Commission, Board of Directors of the Criminal Justice Information Network and Chair for the State Emergency Response Commission.

Judge Young is a graduate of Howard University and North Carolina Central University School of Law. He currently resides in North Carolina with his family.





The Hon. Justin Davis is a judge for the Gaston County Superior Court in the 30A Judicial District on the 5th Division in North Carolina. He was elected to the bench in 2022.

Prior to his election, Davis was in private practice, including as a partner at Mullen Holland & Cooper in Gaston. During that time, he handled civil litigation matters in the Superior Court, Federal Court, the North Carolina Court of Appeals, and the North Carolina Supreme Court, as well as filing a brief in the United States Supreme Court. His areas of practice included complex business disputes, employment law, personal injury, medical malpractice, real estate matters, and contracts.

He received a B.S. in business administration from the University of North Carolina. Davis then completed a J.D. at the University of Richmond School of Law.

He has been involved with the Gaston County YMCA Board of Directors and the Bethlehem Center Board of Directors. Davis was also elected to serve as a member of the Gaston County Board of Education.

He and his wife, Shelton, have two children. The family enjoys outdoor activities, including camping, hiking, and water sports. Davis spends his free time hunting, fishing, and shooting.

THE NORTH CAROLINA DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMISSION

Following the March 6 meeting, the following items ARE PENDING UPDATES and will be posted for comment on our newly updated website between May 1 and June 10, 2026:

- **DRC Lapsed Status and Reinstatement Policy**: clarifying language on timing of lapsed status and recertification process.
- **FFS Rule 8 Amendment:** updating terminology to be consistent with mental health licensure rules.
- **DRC Rules 9 and 10**: updating terminology to be consistent with other DRC policies and guidelines, i.e. "pre-certification" instead of "provisional pre-training."
- **DRC Inactive Status Policy:** clarifying language on timing of CME hours within one year.
- **DRC Court Appointment Fees:** the commission has voted to approve the increase of MSC, FFS and Clerk court appointment administrative fees from $175 to $200 and the MSC, FFS and Clerk court appointed mediator fees from $150 to $200.
- *(REMINDER that these items are pending before the Commission and will not be adopted as final policy until after the comment period ends.)*

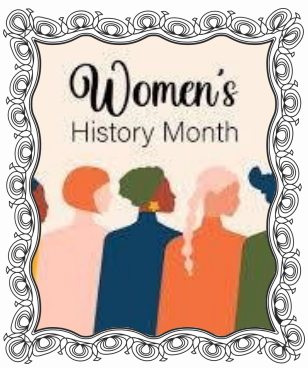


Important Reminders:

Get your CME hours in for 2026-2027 and check out our Podcast, Beyond Neutrality!

BEYOND NEUTRALITY
North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission

July 1, 2026 begins the annual renewal period, stay tuned for updates on the process!



Please keep reading on page 4 for our Staff Spotlight by Brenda Spence!

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NCDRC Commission

Women's History Month

Women as Peacemakers

Contributed by: Brenda Spence, Secretary, DRC

It wasn't until 1978 in Santa Rosa, California that Women's History Week was actually given notice. The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women Education Task Force (long title yet deserving) wanted the week to include International Women's Day on March 8. President Jimmy Carter declared the week of March 8 to be National Women's History Week in 1980. This recognition continued until 1987 when Congress designated March as Women's History Month.

As we commemorate the contributions of the "fairer sex", let's break it down as to how actually "fair" it is/was to the incredible women in our nation's history who may not have been given mention in the history books as ground-breaking chemists, revolutionaries, Nobel Peace Prize recipients, first NASA computer programmer, first female governor, doctors, astronauts, first female U.S. Supreme Court Justice and yes, peacemakers.
It cannot be ignored that women have played crucial roles, often overlooked, as mediators in U.S. history all the while building bridges between divides in community conflict, diplomacy, labor, and squabbles over the last cookie. Here are some interesting and notable facts regarding women mediators and peacebuilders in U.S. history:

1.In the American Midwest during the 19th-century, Native American and Métis women were often called upon to act as "creole mediators" between indigenous communities and English-speaking settlers.

2.Nancy C. Fibish was hired by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) in 1968 following a 21-year male-only hiring practice, causing a shift in institutional labor mediation while improving the durability of peace agreement.

3.Serving as an important anti-war campaigner and mediator, Marii Hasegawa, from 1918 until 2012, Marii worked to help Japanese-Americans relocate and readjust during and after Japanese interment.

Research as to the significance of women in mediation has shown that when women are included as witnesses, mediators, or negotiators, there is an increased probability of 35% for a peace agreement to last at least 15 years. Yet, women only represented 6% of mediators between the years of 1992 and 2019 in major peace processes.

Often in more informal settings, peacemakers, by AI definition "…aim to restore relationships, manage conflict, or act as an intermediary, focusing on reconciliation rather than just settlement." Sounds like the definition of a mediator, of which we boast a significant number of women in who are outstanding and reputable mediators, doing the work and making strides to ease the burden of our esteemed courts. I salute these women who stood (and still stand) their own against countless odds to assert themselves respectfully into a profession that allows the opportunities to settle our differences more often with dignity and compassion.