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1. INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are essential to fulfilling The DRC’s Mission and Vision and are the embodiment of The DRC’s Values.

1.1 MISSION

- The Dispute Resolution Center offers affordable, constructive, restorative and healing approaches to conflict resolution.

1.2 VISION:

- We partner and collaborate with individuals, families, and businesses to build peaceful communities.

1.3 VALUES:

- **Respect:** An understanding that all people have value and need be treated in an appropriate way.
- **Integrity:** An adherence to the principles of fairness and wholeness, using a transparent consensus process whenever possible.
- **Accessible:** Easy to contact or approach.
- **Restorative Justice:** Promoting processes using truth-telling, sharing of information and empowerment with the intent of repairing the harm
- **Diversity & Inclusion:** Promoting and sustaining a sense of community *belonging that values and respects the talents, beliefs and backgrounds of its members*

Know that your work as a Volunteer is greatly appreciated by the DRC Staff and Board of Directors and without you, the DRC would not exist. Volunteer support provide approximately 25% in-kind match as required for state funding. Your donated services allow us to maintain our state funding, expand our services and promote alternative forms of dispute resolution in our community.

This handbook is not intended to replicate or replace the training that you received as a volunteer. Its purpose is to provide a resource that will describe expectations the DRC has of Volunteers and the on-going support and training Volunteers can expect from the DRC Staff. This handbook is a guide and will be periodically reviewed and amended. Questions on any of this information or suggestions for improvement should be directed to DRC staff.

2. VOLUNTEER STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The DRC requires volunteers to approach their service to the DRC with the highest ethical practice as described in the following Standards of Conduct. The guiding principle behind the Standard of Conduct is that volunteers

may be required to disclose information about themselves to the parties or withdraw from the case if circumstances exist that **may give the appearance of impropriety or partiality whether inappropriate behavior actually occurs or not**. Additionally, if there is a consistent violation of the Standards of Conduct, the issues will be addressed in accordance with section 3.4 of this handbook.

The Volunteer Standard of Conduct provides guidance for ethical behavior expected from DRC volunteers. Any questions on the Standards of Conduct should be directed to DRC Staff.

NOTE: Mediators also have an additional Standard of Conduct that was reviewed in their certification training. This can be found in the appendices.

2.1 TO AVOID CONFLICTS OF INTEREST, VOLUNTEERS WILL:

- Disclose a personal or professional relationship, or a mutual affiliation in a professional, social, or other member organization, with either of the parties. Conflicts of interests may also arise if the volunteer recognizes the appearance of an opportunity for any personal or professional gain and/or financial or other benefit.
- Examples of conflict of interest include but are not limited to:
 - Family relation, coworkers, being in a position of authority (boss, therapist, etc), being members of the same club, neighbors, prior experience with a vendor, etc.
- The process for determining when withdrawal is necessary is described below in section 2.5

2.2 TO MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF THE PROCESSES, VOLUNTEERS WILL:

- Maintain an actively neutral role. They shall not advocate for a specific outcome, resolution, or settlement. Volunteers do not need to “agree” with the outcome.
- Not give legal or other professional information, advice, or counsel – even when specifically asked by a participant for their opinion.
- Not knowingly allow participants to propose, discuss, negotiate, or include unlawful activities as part of an agreement.
- Immediately report threats and/or acts of abuse or violence to the DRC staff.
- Volunteers will participate in the debrief process and be open to giving and receiving feedback to colleagues.
- Not allow personal or professional opinions, beliefs, experiences, or other natural biases to hinder or obstruct the process.
- Stay current and update with training and continuing education requirements as described in Section 4.

2.3 TO SERVE WITH INTEGRITY, VOLUNTEERS WILL:

- Not solicit personal business, including referrals, from participants.
- Not allow personal or professional opinions, beliefs, experiences, or other natural biases to hinder or obstruct the process.
- Meet time and task commitments and, when possible, provide sufficient notice when they will not be available so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- Not speak on behalf of The DRC without permission from the Executive Director
- Not disclose their professional background as doing so may appear to compromise the Volunteer’s neutrality in the process. An exception to this standard is licensed attorneys. As part of their professional standards, during alternative resolution proceeding, attorneys serving as a mediator MUST

disclose 1. That they are an attorney; 2. They are not representing either party nor giving any legal advice; and 3. Explain that they are a third-party neutral. Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct 2.4(b) is included in the Appendix.

- Raise with DRC Staff any concerns, issues or questions about any aspect of their role as a Volunteer including quality of services, potential violation of Standards of Conduct or other wrongdoing, support, etc.
- Follow the DRCs policies and procedures as well as any instructions or guidance given to them.

2.4 TO RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE PROCESS, VOLUNTEERS WILL:

- Keep all case proceedings confidential, except during debriefs with the DRC staff.
 - Volunteers will not engage in casual conversation about cases.
 - When it is necessary to discuss a case (e.g., for outreach, training, etc.) volunteers must always change identifying details—gender, race, age, type of business, item under dispute, location, timing of events, etc.
- Destroy notes immediately following completion of the case and secure any notes prior to destruction.
 - If it is necessary to maintain notes for an extended time due to the case requiring multiple sessions, notes will not contain any personally identifiable information of the parties (e.g., no first and last names, addresses, etc.) and will not be accessible by family, friends or the public and secured when not in use.

2.5 WHAT TO DO IF YOU IDENTIFY A POTENTIAL VIOLATION OF THE STANDARD OF CONDUCT:

- The DRC Staff should be informed immediately of any questions or concerns you have. You may contact any Staff member, including the Executive Director with your concern.
- If a conflict of interest is identified before a proceeding begins, the Volunteer should discuss the issue with the DRC staff prior to the start of the session. If a conflict of interest is identified after a proceeding has begun, the Volunteer should pause the session and discuss the situation with DRC Staff. During the discussion, the DRC Staff and the Volunteer will determine one of 2 possible outcomes.

1) The Volunteer must immediately withdraw from the case. If a Volunteer must withdraw from a case, depending on the circumstances and the DRC Staff judgement, an explanation does not have to be offered to the parties.

or

2) The parties will be informed of the conflict and asked if they are willing to continue. Each party has the right to accept or dismiss the volunteer, and all parties must agree to accept in order for the Volunteer to continue to participate. If the Volunteer must withdraw from the case, the DRC Staff will communicate this to the parties and handle next steps (e.g., replace the volunteer, reschedule the session, etc.).

- To the extent possible, adequate information will be provided to Volunteers in advance to prevent improper assignments. In some cases (e.g., small claims, etc.) this may not be possible, so Volunteers need to be prepared to deal with unforeseen conflicts of interest.

3. EXPECTATIONS, REQUIREMENTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DRC VOLUNTEER

3.1 TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS:

- **Mediators** refers to volunteers that mediate community and civil cases. Additional training is required to mediate some cases: Divorce, Probate, Guardianship/Caregiver, Special Education, and any other trainings the DRC requires (such as School attendance).
- **Circle Keepers** refers to volunteers who facilitate restorative justice circles at our center. These cases may come from the court or from the community.
- **Facilitators** refers to volunteers who run large group facilitations. Trained Group Facilitators help community groups clarify needs and empower members to create their own solutions. Facilitation teams employ techniques to identify needs, define goals, and frame complex issues with respect for multiple perspectives. Facilitators use brainstorming to draw out options, opportunities, and challenges. They help the group define the factors by which different options will be evaluated as well as how the group will assign priorities. The primary directive is not to consult, counsel, or advise, but to assist the group in achieving satisfactory outcomes and developing plans-of-action that they determine are realistic for them. At this time The DRC does not provide training for large group Facilitation. If you would like to volunteer as a Facilitator for large group facilitation, please contact the Executive Director to discuss requirements.
- **Community Outreach and Education speakers** present about mediation, conflict resolution, and other alternative dispute resolution processes to such community groups as businesses, churches, schools, membership, affiliation, or service associations, and other non-profit organizations. If you would like to be added to the roster of speakers, please contact the Executive Director.

3.2 BECOMING A VOLUNTEER:

1. Complete the required training (see Training section below)
2. Complete The DRC Volunteer Application Form
3. Read the volunteer handbook and submit an email to Office Manager or Coordinator confirming that you have read and understood it.
4. Complete an orientation meeting
5. Complete an internship period
 - a. **Circle Keepers** Internship period:
 - i. Complete 4 circles with an experienced co-keeper
 - ii. Meet with Kyoko or Carolyn for a strategy session
 - b. **Mediators** Internship period:
 - i. Observe at least 2 mediations
 - ii. Participate in mediations with an experienced co-mediator
 - iii. NOTE: This is *not* the same as being added to the court roster.
 - c. All new volunteers must complete an internship period regardless of experience or skill level. There are often small differences in how things are done from center to center, and it is important to have a DRC experienced co-keeper/mediator at the beginning.
 - d. The DRC staff will monitor the applicant's readiness throughout the internship period by debriefing with the applicant, co-volunteers, and coaches after each session. Each staff member is required to give feedback to volunteers as appropriate.

The DRC reserves the right to accept or decline offers of volunteer service. Completion of mediation training and internship hours does not guarantee future placement with The DRC. Cases are assigned to volunteers at the discretion of The DRC.

3.2.1 Initial Training:

All of our training uses the co-mediation or co-facilitation model. We believe that whenever possible, having two trained people running the meeting is the best practice.

When completing additional training outside of the DRC, it is the Volunteer's responsibility to submit a copy of their certificate of completion to the DRC office manager.

- **Mediators:**

- A "General Civil 40-hour" mediation training approved by the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) ¹ and completed through a court approved General Civil Mediation training program.
- If you were trained Elsewhere: Volunteers who have completed a 40-hour mediation training at a location other than The DRC should submit the completion certificate for The DRC records. A course syllabus, or topic list with agenda, may also be required to confirm that the course content is comparable to SCAO and The DRC standards and learning outcomes.
- Mediators are expected to participate in ongoing continuing education (please see the "Maintaining Active Status" section).

- **Circle Keepers:**

- Complete the Restorative Justice Circle training conducted by The DRC.
- If you have other training, you may be able to participate in a shortened training to integrate you into our volunteer pool.
- Circle Keepers are expected to participate in ongoing continuing education (please see the "Maintaining Active Status" section 3.3).

3.2.2 Becoming Part of the Court Roster

In order to become a part of the court roster please contact your local circuit court. The DRC does not require a roster status in order to volunteer.

Membership in The Court Roster is a special designation earned by experienced volunteers or volunteers with additional professional credentials. Being listed on the court roster enables a volunteer to be appointed by a judge or selected by the parties to mediate a case that is pending litigation. The prerequisites for application² include:

- A license to practice law in the State of Michigan, or a graduate degree in conflict resolution, or documented completion of 40 hours of mediation and/or 18 cases within two years prior to application.
- Eight hours of advanced mediation training within two years of application.
- Observation of two mediations conducted by a court approved volunteer.
- Conducting one case mediated to completion under the supervision of a court approved volunteer.
(Two of these three cases can be small claims cases.)

¹ <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/standards/odr/TrainingStandards2005.pdf>

² <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/48d760/siteassets/odr-temporary/documents/mediator-requirements.pdf>

3.3 MAINTAINING ACTIVE STATUS:

To maintain active status with The DRC, volunteers must complete some tasks each year.

All volunteers must complete the following each year:

1. Read through this Volunteer Handbook and send an e-mail to a Coordinator stating that you have done so. (This is a good time to ask questions if you have any!)
2. Participate in continuing education provided by The DRC.
 - a. **Mediators:** participate in at least two Continuing Education sessions per year. Continuing education may include attending Lunch and Learns provided by the DRC or enrolling in additional mediation courses offered through The DRC or other SCAO approved agencies.
 - b. **Circle Keepers:** participate in at least two Continuing Education sessions each year.
3. Mediate or volunteer for a minimum number of cases
 - a. **Mediators:** mediate a minimum of 3 cases per year
 - b. **Circle Keepers:** sign up for at least 3 cases per year
4. Debrief with your co-mediator/keeper after each session (see the section under Support and Training on “Debriefing” for more information)
5. Touch base with a Coordinator at least once a year for a debrief/strategy session.
 - a. The goal of this meeting is to provide a touchpoint with staff each year for volunteers and staff to exchange information, celebrate victories, share concerns, and make plans for how to best support each other in the coming year.
 - b. If you cannot actively mediate or facilitate, but want to stay an active volunteer, (life happens sometimes), we would like to have this meeting to make sure that staff and volunteers have realistic expectations about what getting back to mediating or facilitating will look like.
 - c. Any concerns or areas for support can be planned at this time.
 - d. Depending on case load and number of volunteers, Case managers may opt for a meeting or written feedback.
6. Notify The DRC staff of changes to personal contact information.

Volunteers who have not met these requirements each year may be required or encouraged to refresh their skills through a combination of observation, practice, and training. Contact The DRC to discuss an appropriate plan.

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to record their participation by signing-in at events, submitting copies of completion certificates to The DRC, and maintaining a Log.

The DRC welcomes volunteers to share abilities and expertise gained from other life experiences that will support the mission of The DRC. Opportunities for other such services as event planning and fundraising, outreach to different constituencies, and/or non-profit governance are available. Please discuss your interests and availability with The DRC Executive Director.

3.4 ADDRESSING CONCERNS

When there are concerns or if a volunteer is unable to fulfill the yearly requirements, then staff will attempt to reach out to the volunteer and make a plan for support. Volunteers are encouraged to reach out to staff as well if they have any concerns.

3.4.1 Addressing Concerns

We all have areas where we need additional support, however if a behavior is concerning, or if it seems that the mediation or circle is being negatively impacted by a volunteer's performance, we may ask volunteers to work with staff to make a plan to address concerns.

This process may also be used if a volunteer feels particularly worried about their own performance and would like to have additional support.

1. Meet with a Coordinator to talk about the concerns. If you'd like to have a support person with you, please let us know when we schedule.
2. Together identify what support is needed. This may be in the form of additional training, coaching, or being strategic about the cases you are placed on.
3. Make a timeline for training/coaching, etc. with set goals.
4. Check in at a set time (3 or 6 months later is usual), to see how the plan is working and decide if any changes need to be made.

3.4.2 Removal of a Volunteer from the DRC Roster

The DRC reserves the right to remove any volunteer from the roster if they do not make an effort to work with staff to address concerns or if staff feels that concerns are serious enough to warrant removal.

- Some things that may result in immediate removal from the volunteer roster include:
 - Breaking confidentiality
 - Harassment
 - Racist or Sexist language/behavior
 - Giving legal advice
 - Promoting your own business
 - Other violations of the Standards of Conduct

3.4.3 No Contact from a Volunteer

When we don't hear from volunteers for an extended period of time, we may reach out to find out if they want to continue to volunteer. Our process will be as follows:

1. Reach out twice by e-mail/phone letting volunteers know that we would like to check in by X date or we'll remove them from the list until we hear back from them.
2. If we reach the volunteer, we will check in with the volunteer to see if they still want to be on the volunteer list, identify any concerns they may have, etc.
 1. If they need a break from volunteering, we'll check back in after an agreed date.
 2. If they have concerns about volunteering, we'll see what can be done to address those concerns.
 3. If they no longer want to volunteer, we will remove them from our volunteer roster.
3. If we cannot reach the volunteer, we will remove them from the volunteer roster until they reach out to us to let us know that they want to volunteer. When someone returns to be an active volunteer, they should meet with a Coordinator prior to getting assigned.

4. SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The DRC provides critical administrative support to volunteers by conducting client intake, processing documentation, collecting fees, and maintaining accurate records. Therefore, volunteers can focus their attention on helping participants resolve problems with minimal paperwork duties.

The DRC encourages a community of learners who engage in purposeful, relevant discussion and dialogue about best practices, emerging trends, and current issues in our field that will better serve the needs of the community and the mission of The DRC.

For information on the initial training to become a mediator or circle keeper, please see section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above.

4.1 AVAILABLE TRAININGS:

While these are separated into “Mediators” and “Circle Keepers”, volunteers are invited to participate in any training provided by the DRC that interests them. Some trainings like the Advanced Trainings and the Refreshers may require previous training in order to participate.

4.1.1 Mediators:

- **Lunch and Learn:** The DRC currently hosts a monthly Lunch and Learn series featuring guest speakers on specific topics. The Lunch and Learns are announced through email to DRC volunteers.
- **Advanced Mediation Training** is available through The DRC and other SCAO Community Dispute Resolution Programs in the State of Michigan. Check The DRC website calendar for local training opportunities. The SCAO website lists other approved training programs especially related to such high need areas Domestic Relations and Probate. In order to participate in one of these please reach out to a Coordinator. Topics include Divorce, Probate, Guardianship/Caregiver, Special Education, and other DRC required trainings.

4.1.2 Circle Keepers

- **Continuing Education:** The DRC hosts a monthly Continuing Education series for Circle Keepers. These are announced via e-mail to volunteers.
- **Refreshers:** When possible, The DRC may offer a one-day refresher course for volunteers who need additional training, who haven’t volunteered in a while, or who simply want to refresh their understanding of the circle process and restorative justice.

4.1.3 Facilitators

- At this time The DRC does not provide training for large group Facilitation. If you would like to volunteer as a Facilitator for large group facilitation, please reach out to Belinda to discuss requirements.

4.2 COACHING

Support Coaching helps individual practice. The DRC can provide coaches who observe and provide constructive feedback to interns and active volunteers. These feedback sessions are at the discretion of The DRC staff. Additionally, you may speak to The DRC staff to arrange a consultation.

Confidentiality in Debriefing and Dialogue

Volunteers may only discuss specific case details during a DRC supervised debriefing.

- ✓ During DRC mediation training, volunteers must always change identifying details—gender, race, age, type of business, item under dispute, location, timing of events, etc...
- ✓ Volunteers must also refrain from sharing non-essential information that is unrelated to the specific point, issue, or concern raised in discussion.

The integrity of The DRC mandates that volunteers do not engage in casual conversations or discussion of cases—ever.

4.3 DEBRIEFING SESSIONS — AFTER MEDIATIONS OR CIRCLES

Volunteers are expected to debrief with their co after *every session*. If you cannot meet immediately after a session, plan a time to meet as soon as possible after.

Debriefing sessions allow volunteers to reflect and evaluate how successfully the process was implemented and what else could be done to improve.

- These discussions should focus on how the team worked together to help participants resolve their dispute and identifying areas for support as well as areas to celebrate. Special care must still be paid to protect confidentiality (see box left).
- NOTE: While it is natural to want to discuss the behavior of the participants after a session, it is important to focus on the behavior and reactions of the mediator or circle keepers during this time.
- Especially challenging cases may require additional time to diffuse upsetting emotional reactions and bring closure to the experience for the volunteer. The DRC Coordinators are always available to debrief even days or weeks after a case.
- Volunteers are encouraged to keep a log of their experiences—not details identifying participants in the case, but rather their reflections on the process and how they can improve. This can be discussed at the yearly debrief with case

managers to strategize how to best support your growth as a volunteer.

- Refer to the Appendices for a Debrief Checklist/Feedback Log to facilitate the conversation.

4.4 DEBRIEFING/STRATEGY SESSIONS — YEARLY

Volunteering for mediations or circles is a rewarding and at times emotionally draining experience. We each have our strengths and deltas (areas where we need support). The regular debriefing sessions after each session (described in section 4.3) allow volunteers to find out what their strengths and areas for growth are. The yearly debrief session is a chance for staff and volunteers to connect, share concerns and celebrate achievements, as well as make a plan for support over the next year. Staff may also use information gathered at these meetings to help plan continuing education.

Depending on case load and number of volunteers on the rosters, Case Managers may choose to have this connection happen via e-mail or other form of communication.

Volunteers are encouraged to be lifelong learners and regularly work on identifying areas for growth in themselves as well as recognizing areas where they excel.

5. FAQ:

Where do cases usually take place?

- Many cases occur over Zoom. If this is the case, your case manager will send you a link with the Meeting ID and passcode for each meeting. The Case Managers will host the Zoom session and the creation of documents, unless volunteers have requested otherwise. If you have concerns about participating in the zoom space, reach out to your case manager to talk about it.
- The DRC mediators primarily observe, practice, and volunteer in any one of-five regularly-scheduled Small Claims Court locations in Washtenaw and Livingston Counties. General Civil (GC), community and other cases that come in through the main office do not follow a set schedule. The DRC Coordinator will notify active volunteers by email about GC cases as they come in providing basic information about the date, time, and a brief description of the case. These cases are held on Zoom unless otherwise noted. These cases are offered on a rotating basis, so all volunteers have an opportunity to volunteer for cases over time.

What if I can't volunteer right now but I would like to once life isn't as busy?

- If you cannot actively mediate or facilitate, but want to stay an active volunteer, (life happens sometimes), we would like to have our once a year debrief/strategy meeting to make sure that staff and volunteers have realistic expectations about what getting back to mediating or facilitating will look like.

Can I just volunteer for either Zoom or in-person cases or do I have to do both?

- Volunteers may volunteer for zoom or in-person cases, or both. Some cases may be more readily available depending on the time, the people involved, or other circumstances. Staff does not always have the flexibility to choose whether a case will be in person or zoom.

Can I request a specific co-mediator or co-circle keeper or request not to co with a specific individual?

- It is possible to request to work with a specific co-mediator or circle keeper. Staff may not always be able to honor your requests depending on availability, training requirements, or other factors.
- If you are requesting **not** to work with a specific individual, staff will try to honor your request, however they may not always be able to do so. If you have concerns about another volunteer, it is important to let staff know about your concerns so that they can either address those concerns or consider offering additional support if needed.

How do I become a mediator/circle keeper?

- Contact our Office Manager to find out when the next training is. You can also check the Training section of our website for more information.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 STAFF CONTACTS

Staff Contacts:

- Executive Director, Belinda Dulin
- Assistant Director, Germaine Smith

Coordinators

- Gail Einhaus, Mediation Coordinator
- Gillian Jackson, Office Support and Mediation Coordinator
- Stephanie Meyers, Mediation Coordinator
- Carolyn Stilwell, Circle Coordinator
- Kyoko Yamamoto, Restorative Justice Coordinator

6.2 HOW TO - GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Giving%20and%20Receiving%20Feedback%20All.pdf>

6.3 CIRCLE KEEPER SPECIFIC:

6.3.1 Circle Keeper's Feedback Log (Debrief Checklist)

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Circle%20Keeper%20Feedback%20Log.docx>

6.3.2 Virtual Circle Consent to Participate

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Virtual%20CIRCLE%20Consent%20form.docx>

6.4 MEDIATION SPECIFIC:

6.4.1 Mediator's Debrief Checklist

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Co-Mediator%20Debrief%20Checklist.docx>

6.4.2 Small Claim Forms used by all Courts (Consent to Mediate and Mediation Agreement forms)

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Consent%20Form%20PDF.pdf>

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Mediation%20Agreement%20Form.docx>

6.4.3 Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct 2.4(b) Attorney Duty To Disclose

<https://drcentermichigan.sharepoint.com/sites/DRCShared/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Folder/Volunteer%20Handbook%20Folder/Appendices/Attorney%20Duty%20To%20Disclose.docx>