



The Mediation Center
Finding common ground.

Volunteer Community Mediator Openings

The Mediation Center is pleased to have openings for new Volunteer Community Mediators. Volunteer mediators help people in our community move through difficult and stressful conflict by having productive conversations that put relationships first. Each year, Volunteer Community Mediators facilitate conversations between hundreds of people in our community. When conflict is resolved peacefully, we all have a safer and more peaceful community.

This is the process for becoming a Volunteer Community Mediator:

- Complete the online [Volunteer Mediator Application](#) by September 6th, 2019.
- We will notify you about the status of your application by September 13th, 2019. Depending on the number of applications we receive, we may not be able to accept everyone. There is more information below on how we make decisions where there are more applicants than spots.
- If you are accepted, you'll be invited to attend 6 full days of training on October 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th, & 11th, 2019 from 9am to 5pm each day, with a one-hour break for lunch. Those dates are Wednesday-Thursday-Friday of two consecutive weeks. With breaks taken out, it's a total of 39 classroom hours. Participants are required to attend the entire course – if you miss more than an hour, you won't be able to continue.
- After the classroom-based training, you'll start an apprenticeship process of mediating with more experienced volunteers. We also ask that you attend in-service training at least every-other-month.
- Volunteer Mediators agree to hold two spots on their calendar each month for mediations.

We are committed to providing professional, ethical, and effective mediation services. There are many opportunities to practice mediation skills during the training, and we will give you lots of feedback and support. In order to serve as a volunteer, training participants must be able to demonstrate key mediation skills by the conclusion of the training. If you or the trainer are concerned about your ability to apply skills at the beginner mediator level, we'll sit down with you and talk through it. Sometimes, the outcome of this conversation is that you won't be able to volunteer as a mediator. In this case, we will work with you to identify alternate volunteer opportunities within the organization or the community.

We are dedicated to increasing the diversity of our volunteer mediator pool. Based on the current make-up of our mediator roster, we are especially in need of people who are:

- People of color
- Young adults (under 45), minimum age is 18.
- Low-income residents
- Members of the LGBT community
- People without a college degree
- Those who live in public or section-8 housing
- People who are formerly incarcerated
- People who are from rural areas of Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania and Polk Counties
- Those who are fluent in both English and Spanish

If we receive more applications than we have spots in the training, we will prioritize people whose applications are a good fit and who will increase the diversity of our mediator pool.

There are no educational or professional requirements to become a mediator. While we do a criminal background check on accepted volunteers, having a prior conviction does not automatically exclude you from volunteering and may be a helpful perspective.

We look forward to receiving your application! Questions? Please review the FAQ on the next page.



Frequently Asked Questions

What kind of mediation is this? In line with the most current research on mediation of interpersonal conflicts, the style of mediation we use places high value on non-judgment and the self-determination of participants. This means that the mediator manages the mediation process but does not give advice or suggestions. We do not use ground rules in mediation (people are allowed to say whatever they want, however they want to say it). Mediators don't give advice, tell people what to do or decide who is right or wrong. Instead, mediation empowers the participants to find solutions that work for them. Also, we always have two mediators mediating together cooperatively. This helps with quality control, and gives both mediators support.

What kinds of conflict will I learn to mediate? We value mediation and conflict resolution because relationships matter, and that's the focus of our training. While the nature of the conflicts varies widely, the scenarios we use always involve relationships. Participants might be family members, neighbors, co-workers, friends, acquaintances, or even just members of the same community. Training does not focus on disputes that are purely transactional, such as insurance settlements or contract disputes between strangers.

What's the training like? Well, perhaps most importantly - not boring! Participants tell us that the time flies by. Our style is engaging and experiential. Experiential learning - where you try out skills that you may not yet have a solid handle on and then reflect about your experience - can be exciting, interesting, and sometimes frustrating. We won't be handing you a step-by-step manual to mediation. Instead, we'll build your mediation skills step by step while you try them out and reflect along the way. We use discussion, handouts, games, role-plays, videos, music, and other approaches to keep things moving.

What will we do during the training? What's the agenda? The training starts on the first day with development of mediator-specific listening skills, exploring the values of mediation, discussion of the causes of conflicts, various approaches to conflict resolution, and the role of the mediator. In the afternoon, we start to role-play the first step of the mediation process which is when the mediator gives an introduction of sorts, explains the process, and answers questions. We spend a LOT of time practicing mediator-specific listening skills that enable you to work on understanding what's most important to the participants without judgment, advice, suggestions.

The rest of the training involves continued skills development and many hours of role-play practice and feedback. Participants learn to analyze their own practice and adherence to the model, give feedback to peers, and receive feedback from the trainer. There is little lecture.

Is there anything I should read beforehand? How do I prepare? Our training is largely experiential, so we don't ask participants to come prepared with background information. There are many models of mediation that are used across the country and there are certainly books about how to mediate, but the variation in models may prove more confusing than helpful.

Do I need to have a certain educational or professional background to participate? Absolutely not. Training participants are diverse and come from a variety of backgrounds. Participants share a desire to make our community a safer and more peaceful place for everyone. Since mediators don't give advice or make decisions about how conflicts should be resolved, having subject-specific knowledge or expertise is not required - and can sometimes even get in the way. That said, solid listening skills, and open mind, a willingness to try out new skills, openness to being non-judgmental, and respect for others all give a useful foundation for mediation skills.

How often do you offer the training? Generally once a year or every-other year.



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Still have questions? E-mail us at coreyh@mediatewnc.org.