



Volunteer Community Mediator Openings

The Mediation Center is pleased to have openings for new Volunteer Community Mediators and is offering a fully-online 40-hour Community Mediation Training in October 2020.

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. When conflict is resolved peacefully, we all have a safer and more peaceful community.

The model of mediation we practice is radically non-judgmental. We value the self-determination of participants and believe that people know best how to move forward in their own conflicts. Mediators don't tell people what to do, decide who is right or wrong, give advice, share their own experiences, or push people towards agreements. They never make suggestions, make rules about how communication happens during mediation, or give advice. Instead, they walk participants through a conflict resolution process so the participants can create their own solutions. During this 40-hour training, you'll learn how to co-mediate this process so that you can volunteer as a mediator at The Mediation Center.

Dates and Details

Training is free for those who apply and are accepted.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Community Mediation Training will be done entirely on Zoom. For this live, interactive, participation-based class. Everyone must:

- Be **AUDIO-ON** and **VIDEO-ON** for the entire training.
- Have ready access to handouts provided.
- Be in a **reasonably quiet place** (although barking, meowing and kid noise are okay - we get it!).
- Have a **reasonably stable internet connection** and **stationary environment** (not in the car!).
- **We expect a constant level of active participation.** There will be very few times to sit back and listen.
- **Attend the *entire* course – if you miss more than an hour, you won't be able to continue.**

In total and excluding breaks, the training lasts 40 hours. The schedule is as follows:

- Thursday, October 1 from 9:30am to 4:30pm
- Friday, October 2 from 9:30am to 4:30pm
- Thursday, October 8 from 9:30am to 4:30pm
- Friday, October 9 from 9:30am to 4:30pm
- Thursday, October 15 from 9:30am to 4:30pm
- Friday, October 16 from 9:30am to 4:30pm
- In addition, 7 to 10 hours of homework outside of class time between training dates.
- There will be audio-off, video-off breaks: 15 minutes in the morning, 60 minutes for lunch, and 15 minutes in the afternoon.

If either the date or the training format don't work for you right now, we invite you to consider applying post-pandemic when we are able to resume in-person training.



Application Process:

- Complete the online [Volunteer Mediator Application](#) by **September 7, 2020**. We will notify you about the status of your application by Friday, September 11, 2020.
- We generally receive more applications than we have available spots. When this happens, we make decisions based on both fit and the diversity of our current 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
 - People without a college degree
 - Those who live in public or section-8 housing
 - People who are formerly incarcerated and have experience being involved in the justice system
 - People who are from rural areas of Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania and Polk Counties
 - Those who are fluent in both English and Spanish

What happens after training?

- After the classroom-based training, you'll start an apprenticeship process of mediating with more experienced volunteers. For at least the remainder of 2020, all mediation is being done via Zoom. We will resume in-person mediation when we are able.
- Volunteers attend in-service training at least every-other-month for as long as they continue mediate.
- Volunteers agree to hold two, 2-hour blocks on their schedules to mediate. For now, all mediation is being done via Zoom and we expect to continue this through at least 2020.

Be aware:

- **In order to serve as a volunteer, training participants must be able to demonstrate key mediation skills by the conclusion of the training.** 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. 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.
- **Volunteers are not able to select cases or types of cases that they will mediate.** Cases involve a wide variety of community issues including neighborhood conflicts, interpersonal issues between friends, family members, co-workers, misdemeanor criminal cases, and too many other types of conflict to list! You cannot mediate cases for people you know.
- **This is a training to become a volunteer within the community mediation program of the Mediation Center. You cannot represent yourself as a Mediation Center mediator and do your own mediations outside of our program.** There is no legal or confidentiality protection for community mediators operating on their own which creates ethical issues. Of course, you can informally use the skills you learn in many different settings – just not offering mediation as a neutral third party on your own. If you have questions about this, be sure to ask us upfront!



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 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! 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 will 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.

Still have questions? E-mail us at laurahj@mediatewnc.org and we will get back to you ASAP.