



The Mediation Center
Finding common ground.

Become a Volunteer Community Mediator

Training starts in January 2024

Each year, Volunteer Mediators help hundreds of people in our community navigate difficult and stressful conflicts each year by having productive conversations that put relationships first. Community mediation creates a safer and more peaceful community for everyone.

Training is free for those who apply and are accepted. Training participants commit to volunteer for at least 2 mediation sessions per month for 2 years (50 hours of volunteering) and attend at least 16 hours a year of in-service training.

Volunteer Community Mediators complete our Community Mediation Training, which includes 50 hours of classroom time and 6 additional hours of homework.

Our Commitment to Diversity

To best serve the diverse individuals who use our services, we are dedicated to building a diverse pool of volunteer mediators. We actively seek individuals who vary across a range of characteristics, including the following priority areas:

- Race/ethnicity
- Age (people 16+ welcome)
- Socioeconomic background/status
- Sexuality/gender identity
- Living situations (including people who live in public or Section-8 housing)
- Educational background (no minimum requirement)
- Personal, family, or work experience with substance use, the justice system, and incarceration.
- Living across Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, and Polk Counties
- Availability – we need some mediators during business hours and others on weekday evenings.
- Those who are fluent in both English and Spanish



Training Format and Schedule

In total and excluding breaks, the training lasts 50 hours, plus about 6 hours of homework. Some sessions are in person, and others are on Zoom. You must attend in the designated format for each date (i.e., you can't "Zoom in" to the in-person sessions). **Everyone must attend the *entire* course – if you miss more than an hour, you won't be able to continue.**

For Zoom sessions, you must:

- Be **AUDIO-ON** and **VIDEO-ON**
- 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!).
- **Be ready to participate!** There will be very few times to sit back and listen.

In-person sessions will be held in downtown Asheville in the United Way building. Free parking is available.

Participants attend **all** the following sessions:

Day	Date	Time	Format
Tuesday	30-Jan	5:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Zoom
Wednesday	31-Jan	5:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Zoom
Tuesday	6-Feb	5:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Zoom
Wednesday	7-Feb	5:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Zoom
Saturday	10-Feb	9:00 am - 5:30 pm	In-person
Sunday	11-Feb	9:00 am - 5:30 pm	In-person
Tuesday	13-Feb	5:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Zoom
Tuesday	20-Feb	5:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Zoom
Wednesday	21-Feb	5:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Zoom
Saturday	2-Mar	9:00 am - 5:30 pm	In-person

Plus, each participant attends **two** of the following intensive role-play sessions:

Day	Date	Time	Format
Friday	23-Feb	9:00 am - 1:00 pm (morning)	In-person
Friday	23-Feb	1:30 pm - 5:30 pm (afternoon)	In-person
Saturday	24-Feb	9:00 am - 1:00 pm (morning)	In-person
Saturday	24-Feb	1:30 pm - 5:30 pm (afternoon)	In-person
Sunday	25-Feb	9:00 am - 1:00 pm (morning)	In-person
Sunday	25-Feb	1:30 pm - 5:30 pm (afternoon)	In-person



Application Process

1. Complete the online [Volunteer Mediator Application](#).
2. Applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis while we work to create a varied and diverse pool of mediators. We understand that you are holding the training dates on your calendar, and we will work to get back to you as quickly as possible.
3. Schedule a short informal Zoom meeting with our staff so we can learn more about your interest in becoming a volunteer community mediator and answer any questions.
4. Be notified if you are accepted to participate, and commit to attending within one week of notification.
5. Let us know immediately if your schedule changes and you cannot attend the training so we can offer another volunteer the spot.

After Training

- After the classroom-based training, you'll start an apprenticeship process, including observing mediation and mediating with more experienced mediators.
- Training participants commit to be available to mediate at least twice a month for two years (approximately 50 hours of volunteering).
- Volunteer mediators must attend at least 16 hours of in-service training each year.

Be Aware

- **To serve as a volunteer, training participants must be able to demonstrate basic mediation skills by the conclusion of the training.** There are many opportunities to practice skills during the training, and we will give you lots of feedback and support. Training participants who are not able to demonstrate these skills can work with staff to find other ways to fulfill their volunteer commitment (50 hours).
- **Volunteers cannot select cases they will mediate.** Cases involve various community issues, and we do not always know in advance what topics people will bring up during mediation. Discuss concerns with us before the training.
- **This is 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 mediation outside our program.** There is no statutory or confidentiality protection for community mediators operating independently, which creates ethical issues. Of course, you can informally use the skills you learn in many different settings – just not offering mediation 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 the 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). Instead, mediation empowers participants to find solutions that work for them. We use a co-mediation mode, so 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 because relationships matter, and that's the focus of our training. While the nature of the conflicts varies widely, mediation participants might be family members, neighbors, co-workers, friends, acquaintances, or just members of the same community.

What's the training like? Well, perhaps most importantly - not boring! Our style is engaging and experiential. Experiential learning - where you try out skills you may not yet have a solid handle on and then reflect on your experience - can be exciting, engaging, 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, and other approaches to keep things moving.

What will we do during the training? What's on the agenda? We start by exploring the values of mediation, the causes of conflict, approaches to conflict resolution, and the role of the mediator. We spend a great deal of time practicing mediator-specific listening and reflecting skills that enable you to work on understanding what's most important to the participants without judgment, advice, or suggestions. We cover topics like the program's relationship to the court system, mediator ethics and rules, and the logistics of mediating. The of training has many hours of skill development through role-play, reflection, and feedback. Participants learn to analyze their adherence to the model, give feedback to peers, and receive feedback from the trainer.

Is there anything I should read beforehand? How do I prepare? Our training is mainly experiential, so we don't ask participants to come prepared with background information. Many mediation models are used nationwide, 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 specific educational or professional background to participate? Absolutely not. Volunteer Community Mediators come from a variety of backgrounds. Since mediators don't give advice or decide 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, an open mind, a willingness to try new skills, openness to being non-judgmental, and respect for others give a useful foundation.

Do I still have to do your training if I have prior mediator training? Yes, without exception. Mediation models vary, and to ensure quality services, we require that everyone complete our training.

Still have questions? E-mail Executive Director Laura Jeffords at laurahj@mediatewnc.org and she will get back to you ASAP.