



Become a Volunteer Community Mediator

Training Starts August 29, 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.

To become a Volunteer Community Mediator with the Mediation Center, you must complete our Community Mediation Training, which includes 50 hours of classroom and homework time. **Training is free for those who apply and are accepted. The Mediation Center invests about \$2000 in training each volunteer. In exchange, participants commit to volunteer for at least 2 mediation sessions per month for 2 years (50 hours of volunteering), complete a 16-hour apprenticeship, work toward certification as NC District Criminal Court Mediators and attend at least 16 hours a year of in-service training.** Note that this certification authorizes practice within a designated community mediation center and not independently.

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:

- People who live in Henderson, Polk, and Transylvania Counties *TOP NEED*
- 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. Sessions are in person, except for one day 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 Hendersonville or Tryon.

Participants attend all the following sessions:

Day	Date	Time	Format	
Thursday	August 29	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person	
Friday	August 30	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person	
Thursday	September 5	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person	
Friday	September 6	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person	
Friday	September 13	9:00am – 5:00pm	On Zoom	
Thursday	September 19	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person	
Friday	September 20	9:00am – 5:00pm	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. If you are accepted to participate, you will be notified, and we ask that you 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 the spot to another volunteer.



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.
- Volunteer mediators are expected to work towards certification as NC District Criminal Court Mediators if they qualify. More information will be provided.

Be Aware

- **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 high-quality, 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.
- **Volunteers cannot select cases or types of cases 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 others. You cannot mediate cases for people you know.
- **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. Of course, you can informally use the skills you learn in many different settings. 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). 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. We always have two mediators mediating together cooperatively. This helps with quality control and gives both mediators support.

What kinds of conflicts will I learn to mediate? We value mediation because relationships matter, and that's the focus of our services. Training does not focus on purely transactional disputes, such as insurance settlements or contract disputes. District criminal courts refer more than half of conflicts.

What's the training like? 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 skills step by step and reflect along the way. We use discussion, handouts, games, role-plays, videos, music, and other approaches to keep things moving.

Is there anything I should read beforehand? How do I prepare? No. There are certainly books and resources 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. 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 all give a useful foundation for mediation skills.

Do I still have to do your training if I have prior mediator training? Yes. Mediation models vary, and to ensure the highest quality services, we require that everyone complete our training. All our mediators practice in pairs using the same evidence-supported model.

Still have questions? E-mail Executive Director Laura Jeffords at laurahj@mediatewnc.org

Thank you!