



The Mediation Center
Finding common ground.

Become a Volunteer Community Mediator

50-Hour Training Starts July 29, 2025

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

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 approximately \$ 2,500 in training each volunteer. In exchange, participants commit to volunteering for at least two mediation sessions per month for two years (50 hours of volunteering), completing a 16-hour apprenticeship, working toward certification as a NC District Criminal Court Mediator, and attending at least 16 hours of in-service training per year. Note that this certification authorizes practice within a designated community mediation center and not independently.

Our Commitment to Diversity

To best serve the diverse community members who use our services, we are dedicated to building a diverse pool of volunteer mediators.

Based on the composition of our current volunteer pool and client populations, these are the top needs:

- People who live in Polk and Transylvania Counties
- People with fluency in both English and Spanish
- Black and Hispanic/Latino people

We also seek diversity in the following areas:

- Location around Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, and Polk Counties
- Professional background/work history (no minimum requirement)
- 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.
- Availability (we need mediators during both business hours and the evening)

We anticipate having 6 spots available in the Community Mediation training, which we offer about once a year.

Training Format and Schedule

In total, the training lasts 50 hours, plus about 6 hours of homework. Sessions are in-person, except for one evening and one full-day session 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 be in a **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 at the United Way Building in downtown Asheville. Free parking is provided.

Participants attend **all** the following sessions:

Day	Date	Time	Format
Tuesday	July 29	5:30pm to 8:30pm	On Zoom
Friday	August 1	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person
Saturday	August 2	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person
Sunday	August 3	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person
Friday	August 8	9:00am – 5:00pm	On Zoom
Saturday	August 9	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person
Sunday	August 10	9:00am – 5:00pm	In-person

Application Process

1. Complete the online [Volunteer Mediator Application](#).
2. Applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis as we create a class of mediators to fill current gaps in our mediator pool. 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 half-hour informal Zoom meeting with our staff and a current volunteer 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 three days of notification.
5. Please notify us immediately if your schedule changes and you are unable to 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 being 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 an NC District Criminal Court Mediator 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. If you cannot meet this requirement, we will invite you to fulfill your volunteer commitment in a non-mediation role.
- **Volunteers cannot select specific 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 can communicate to us any specific interests that you have, but all volunteers mediate a variety of cases. You cannot mediate cases for people you know.
- **The purpose of this course is to train community members to become volunteers 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. This course is not intended to be a path to work as a paid mediator, either with The Mediation Center or on your own. Of course, you can apply the skills you learn in many different settings informally. If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to ask 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. We do not generally mediate purely transactional disputes, such as insurance settlements or contract disputes.



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About half of the conflicts we mediate are referred by the District Criminal Courts. These are misdemeanor criminal cases, typically involving disputes between neighbors, family members, or other community associates. Common charges include assault, communicating threats, money owed, and trespassing. We mediate these conflicts in a neutral and radically non-judgmental way, without assumptions about who is right or wrong, or what should happen. These community conflicts are rooted in relationships, and mediation provides the people involved with the opportunity to discuss the conflict directly and decide how they want to move forward, rather than having the court make the decision. In all cases, the people involved are invited to talk about whatever they want, and participants often work on resolving other issues outside of the court case.

Can I make up sessions that I miss? You can make up to one hour of missed time. Our training is certified by the NC Dispute Resolution Commission, and we comply with their requirements. One requirement is that all training must be live and face-to-face (watching recordings is not permitted). We do not have the capacity to offer face-to-face, full-length make-up sessions of more than one hour. Also, because the training is cumulative, it would be confusing to miss a portion and rejoin. We understand that people get sick and emergencies happen, and we will work with you to make a plan for future training.

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 grasp of and then reflect on your experience, can be exciting, engaging, and sometimes frustrating. We will build your skills step by step and reflect on your progress along the way. We use a variety of approaches, including discussions, handouts, games, role-plays, videos, and other methods 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. However, you must live or work in Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, or Polk County. There are additional state requirements for becoming certified. If you do not meet these requirements, we still welcome you to participate in training and be a volunteer mediator. If you do meet the requirements, we expect you to become certified within 12 to 18 months of your training.

Do I still have to do your training if I have prior mediator training? *Yes, without exception.* 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. Mediators who have training in other models generally find this approach to be fundamentally different than what they have learned before and are challenged to “unlearn” and learn at the same time.

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

Thank you!