



IMPACT REPORT FY2021

Family Mediation Program

The Family Mediation Program at NVMS Conflict Resolution Center (NVMS CRC) has continued to serve community members who need help the most, under the steady guidance of Megan Borishansky (she/her/hers), Senior Manager. Highlights of the Family Mediation Program include the following:

- **30 individuals learned to manage emotions and communicate more effectively.** Through NVMS Managing Family Conflict webinars, 30 individuals accessed valuable tools for effectively managing their emotions and calmly communicating their needs to resolve conflicts with family members and loved ones. Free to the public, these webinars were streamed live as engaging workshops through local libraries and faith organizations.
- **35 parents learned effective co-parenting skills.** Our Co-Parenting classes, delivered virtually to parents from separate households, provided strategies for effective co-parenting to more than 35 parents so far in 2021. These classes help parents work together to put their children first and engage in collaborative decision-making.
- **24 family members peacefully resolved interpersonal conflicts.** Our family mediators helped over 24 individuals peacefully resolve their interpersonal conflicts and will continue to help many more this year. All self-referred clients can access our family and interpersonal mediation services at rates set on a sliding scale according to their individual annual incomes.
- **Addressing 40 backlogged child support cases + new referrals.** Court-ordered child support cases have once again begun to stream into our mediation program. We are addressing a backlog of close to 40 cases while receiving new referrals for recently filed

petitions. NVMS CRC educates all referred parents about mediation as a tool for managing conflict and helps qualifying parents collaborate to determine how best to support their children financially.

Court and Community Programs

Abigail Blatt (she/her/hers) joined NVMS CRC in April as the new Court and Community Programs Coordinator. She has mounted an outstanding effort to transition into the program, with the following critical updates:

- **Rising cases help mediator-in-training mentoring.** Although court-referred cases are limited due to Covid-19, we are beginning to see a slight rise in court-referred and private cases. The increase in cases is allowing us to assign cases to mediators-in-training who are working with a mentor-mediator as part of the NVMS CRC mentorship program.
- **Piloting a new approach to certification.** The Office of the Executive Secretary for the Dispute Resolution Service for the Supreme Court of Virginia has given NVMS CRC approval to pilot the efficacy of role-playing as a way toward earning certification. The pilot will take place in September.
- **Coordinating relaunch of in-person mediation services.** Since July 1, 2021, we have been coordinating in-person mediation services at the general district courts in Arlington County, the City of Falls Church, and Loudoun County.
- **Mediators and partners contributed to the design and launch of online dispute resolution program.** The Fairfax County General District Court launched a pilot Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) program in April. The ODR platform allows parties to mediate their disputes virtually and will replace in-person mediation through April of 2022. We are grateful to our mediators and partners for providing critical feedback during the design and testing phases in the development of the ODR program, as well as for their willingness to help train other practitioners.
- **New InfoHub portal facilitates mediator sign-up.** We are pleased to launch an online mediator sign-up portal for Fairfax, Arlington, Falls Church, and Loudoun general district courts in our website's Civil Mediation InfoHub. The InfoHub includes updated court documents, guidelines, and other mediation resources.
- **Workshops prepare practitioners for rise in evictions.** To prepare for the rise in evictions following the end of the COVID-19 eviction moratorium, NVMS CRC is working with practitioners to provide Community of Practice (CoP) workshops on local eviction

laws, landlord-tenant refresher courses, and collaboration with related community resources.

Restorative Justice Program

NVMS Conflict Resolution Center has taken steps to incorporate the case management work for the Alternative Accountability Program (AAP) within the operations of the organization after many years of supportive work from volunteers such as **David Deal, Bill Casey, Leigh Pence, and Randy Jones Toll**. **Christian Paris** (he/him/his) joined NVMS CRC in June as our first Restorative Justice Program Coordinator (part-time). In addition to AAP case management, Chris is furthering NVMS's proactive restorative justice footprint in the Route 1 Corridor area, with funding from the Northern Virginia Community Foundation.

- **More than 90% of referred AAP cases yielded successful outcomes.** While COVID-19 affected the caseload for AAP, 39 cases were still referred, and 36 yielded successful outcomes to hold first-time offending youth accountable to their actions. Over 70% of successful AAP circles were facilitated or co-facilitated by NVMS CRC. Three cases have been referred to NVMS CRC for FY22.
- **Restorative justice ambassador program will serve and empower youth along Route 1.** NVMS CRC is excited to spearhead a community-driven restorative justice ambassador program to serve and empower youth in the Route 1 Corridor, in Alexandria/Mount Vernon of Fairfax County, also referred to as an “island of disadvantage,” in a 2019 report commissioned by the Northern Virginia Health Foundation. This project will aim to be proactive in its implementation of restorative justice principles, creating a training and facilitation template for young community leaders to learn, practice, and subsequently be trained in the principles of restorative justice. This initiative will be intentionally co-developed with the visions and wisdom of youth and community leaders along Route 1, thus ensuring that its intended impact will be aligned with the stated needs of the communities it aims to support.

Training Program

After 10 years marked by innovation and resilience, **Izabela Solosi** (she/her/hers) transitioned in July to a national policy and research nonprofit. At NVMS CRC, she created internal systems we now use daily, developed and maintained exacting standards in training, cultivated partnerships, and created a culture of life-long learning.

We are pleased to announce that **Wind** (they/them/ theirs) is the new Training Programs Coordinator at NVMS. They are no stranger to NVMS, with 10 years of connection to the organization – as a Court and Community Programs intern and a member of NVMS's roster of certified mediators and restorative justice facilitators. Wind is energized and ready to bring the diversity, equity, and inclusivity lens to training.

The mediation training programs, CoP workshops, and open-enrollment courses that are Continuing Mediator Education (CME)-certified by the Supreme Court of Virginia are among the best and most rigorously vetted in the Commonwealth of Virginia. While COVID-19 prompted the transition to a once-unfamiliar virtual platform, online training is now commonplace and is breaking geographic barriers to people accessing those trainings.

- **Reaching city and federal government agencies, plus university students.** NVMS CRC started the year with two group trainings on basic mediation with the City of Alexandria and the Department of Defense (U.S. Army). We continue to partner with Georgetown University, which offers its graduate and law students the opportunity to complete mediation training certification.
- **Offering online training for employee groups.** We are bolstering efforts to schedule group training where employees can learn from the same “page,” engage in role-playing and activities together, and build skills and confidence through hands-on training.
- **14 online trainings delivered for private organizations and partners.** Although 2020 slowed participation in our open-enrollment courses, COVID-19 has not stopped us from delivering 14 trainings, with several of them being privately contracted from organizations with which we continue to build partnerships.
- **DEI kick-off and training - highest enrollment.** As a kickoff to our integration of DEI into the fabric of our organization, on May 26, 2021, we held our largest training to date: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Mediation. At its peak, we had 120 attendees who were able to listen and engage with our panelists on the importance of understanding our roles as practitioners with a DEI lens.

Training remains a critical staple for NVMS CRC in terms of our mission, education support and stewardship of practitioners, and pushing the envelope of what conflict resolution means under the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Up ahead, we seek additional group training opportunities.

- We plan to expand the scope of topics for Communities of Practice and open-enrollment courses.

- We look forward to offering family mediation training and restorative justice training with greater frequency.

Your Organization: NVMS Conflict Resolution Center

Over the last 12 months, NVMS CRC has shown great fortitude in meeting the challenges of COVID-19 and a leadership transition in the organization.

- **Executive director and board appointments.** In addition to appointing **Arleen Ramirez Borysiewicz** as executive director in July 2020, five community, business, and former government leaders joined the Board of Directors – each bringing unique skills, networks, and experience to the organization. They include: **Guillermo Birmingham** (finance), **Abe Pollack** (law firm/university partnerships), **Edmond Ebeid** (information technology), **Laurina Spolidoro** (court mediation), **Sonia Aranza** (diversity, equity & inclusivity), and **J. Walter Tejada** (community advocacy).
- **Launch of Advisory Council.** We created the NVMS CRC Advisory Council, inviting individuals who have had profound influence and impact on the organization. Current members include **Frank Blechman, John Bleiweis, Linda Hall, Randy Jones Toll, James Meditz, and Jeannette Twomey.**
- **Farewell – and gratitude for continued service.** We bade farewell to board member whose terms expired in the past 12 months, including **Ronald Williams, Randy Jones Toll, Daniel Rainey, Eric Newton, and Linda Hall.** We are humbled that they continue to be involved as restorative justice/conflict resolution practitioners and/or trainers, and in many other important ways.

NVMS CRC withstood staff transition with resoluteness and creativity. Our current team is a group of professionals immersed in the field of alternative dispute resolution and with skills and passion to take the organization to its next level of growth.

- **Investing in operations and revenue generation.** We invested in an operations/fundraising/communication staff to allow the executive director to conduct more external relations, partnerships, and fundraising work.
- **Celebrating “super volunteers.”** We are thankful to our practitioners who lend their time to support our clients. We sing praises to our “super volunteers” – **Bill Casey, Leigh Pence, Randy Jones Toll, Laurie Spolidoro, and Diane Hill** – for all the hours they share to support programs and operations.

- **Strengthening partnerships.** We are grateful for the grants and partnerships with the **Supreme Court of Virginia's Dispute Resolution Services**, the **Fairfax County Consolidated Funding Pool**, and the **Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court**.
- **Recognizing generous contributors.** Support from foundations, businesses, and individuals have been generous. We thank our new organization partners – **ReConnect Fairfax, Rebuild Virginia, John Ben Snow Memorial Trust, and the Community Foundation of Northern Virginia** – and our new individual donors.

Beyond our focus on building partnerships and strengthening our community engagement, several high-level priority areas have emerged – developing a pipeline for new practitioners and trainers, creating new constructs for how to integrate DEI values into our operations and programs, building a stronger operational foundation, and developing a strategic path toward long-term financial sustainability.

Toward this end, NVMS CRC will be embarking on a strategic planning process this fall, and it will seek to engage diverse stakeholders in this critical effort to build a three-year road map. Challenges are ahead for NVMS CRC, but the future is optimistic because of the shared support, time, energy, and resources from many.

More than ever before, the need for alternative dispute resolution is clear. Engaging community members in a search for common ground and peacebuilding is powerful motivation for collaboration and coming together.