

NM ADR NEWS

Encouraging communication through mutual respect

ADR TRAINING INITIATIVE

Introductory Issue

About the OADPR

The 2007 Governmental Dispute Prevention & Resolution Act (GDPRA) created the OADPR to promote early dispute resolution and positive collaboration among state employees and agencies through the development and support of effective and efficient programs and policies. The Office operates as a Bureau of the Risk Management Division (RMD) of the General Services Department (GSD).

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The State Office of Dispute Prevention and Resolution encourages state agencies to take a broad approach to training in dispute prevention and resolution. OADPR promotes trainings in multiple formats and at different levels that can be made available to both managers and employees. The following sample of upcoming training opportunities sponsored or coordinated by OADPR ranges from no cost, to nominal tuition/fees for formal instruction. State Personnel and many agency regulations allow for agencies to support work-related education and practice/service time through educational/administrative leave and tuition reimbursement. This support fulfills the Governmental Dispute Prevention and Resolution Act's requirement that agencies "take fiscal actions necessary" to support training.

1. Monthly Brown Bag Lunch Presentation Series

Lunch time presentations on ADR-related topics by subject matter experts. Participants will receive practical information for immediate use.

First presentation: Tuesday, July 29th in Santa Fe

Presenter: Marlene Schwalje, "Essential Elements of a Successful Workplace ADR Process"

2. Coordinated presentations of Deer Oaks EAP Services

Sample of presentation titles: Workplace Conflict and Interpersonal Relationships, Dealing with Conflict, Problem Solving, The Art of Listening, Effective Communication, Preparing for Change, Conflict Resolution Through "Win-Win" Strategies, Respect in the Workplace, Facilitation, Solving Interpersonal Conflicts on the Job, Use of "Conflict Resolution Groups," How to Reduce Employee Conflict With Co-Workers and Supervisors, Team Building

3. Labor Management Relationship Development and Training

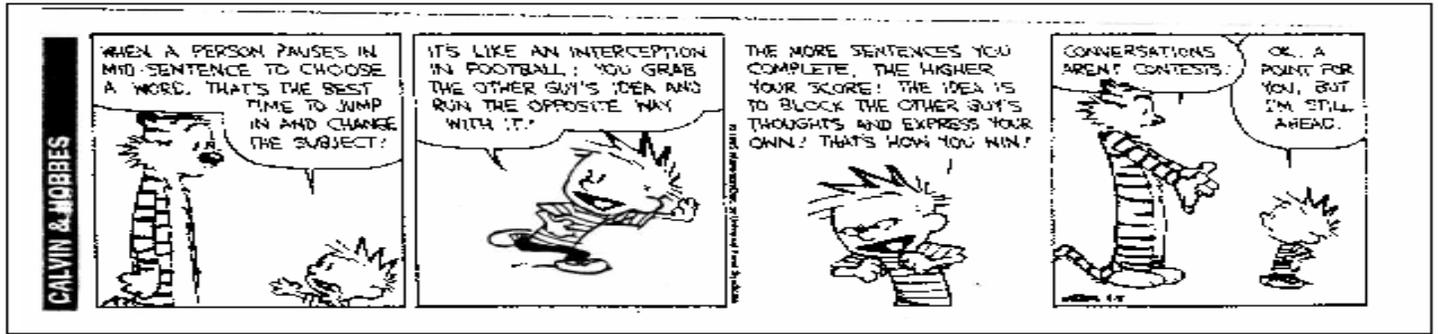
The Albuquerque Area Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, in partnership with state government, will present no-cost training to managers from agencies with collective bargaining agreements in place. This 3-day training program is designed to improve labor-management relationships by helping labor and management to develop collaborative problem-solving approaches. Effective use of these programs better enables parties to jointly respond to change and makes future mediation efforts more effective.

4. Formal ADR training through SF Community College

SFCC will offer formal instruction customized to enhance state employees' conflict resolution and mediation skills and increase the overall productivity and effectiveness of state agencies and organizations. State employees can earn college credit for the course, as well as for ADR-related volunteer service, and can choose to take the 40-hour class over a semester, or in five consecutive days. State employees may request administrative leave and tuition assistance for the nominal registration fee from their agencies.



Please contact our Office for more information on any of these training opportunities.



The Magic & Power of Listening

One of the most often misunderstood or neglected aspects of effective communication is the act of listening. Most books and courses on mediation, negotiation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) invariably include or offer a chapter or section on the subject. In Steven Covey's highly acclaimed and successful book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, he refers to listening as "the magical habit". Likewise, John Hopkins University professor Pier Massimo Forni in his book Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct, listed the ability to listen as fourth on the list of twenty five rules.

As most dispute resolution classes stress, there is nothing that has more potential to de-escalate conflict than **listening to understand**. Yet as a culture, for the most part, Americans are not very good at this. As the cartoon above lightheartedly illustrates, in the United States communication is often a competitive exercise in which the first person to draw a breath is declared "the listener". In The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution, Bernard Mayer differentiates listening to connect from listening to debate. The most frequent way we listen while in conflict is to debate. Instead of trying to make a real effort to understand what the other person is trying to communicate to us, often we are listening to find fault with their statements, or, worse yet, not really listening but instead mentally preparing a response. We may hear their words, but may have totally missed their message by being closed off to the meaning of those words.

While many books and articles offer techniques for improving listening skills, as long as one's mindset remains one of judging and debating, no amount of techniques will help. So the first and most important

thing to strive for is to listen to understand, not to judge or find fault. Only after intently working on adopting this mindset of truly trying to understand the other person's words can we begin the task of learning and applying proven techniques that can make us better listeners.

Some of these techniques are:

- Be truly present and able to engage in a dialogue. If you are not in a mental or physical space to fully engage, ask to schedule your conversation at another time or location.
- Listen for content, emotions and values, things that are most important to the other person.
- Respond by acknowledging and clarifying their message thru summarizing, paraphrasing, reframing or restating what you understand they have said.
- Ask the other person whether you have accurately reflected their feelings and message, and whether there is anything else you still might not understand about their situation.

The art of communicating is a dynamic, creative exchange of talking and listening. While the importance of clearly articulating your message should not be underestimated, nor should the importance of true listening be minimized. True listening involves a temporary setting aside of the self, suspending judgment long enough to gain an understanding, acceptance and appreciation of the other's situation and frame of reference. The "magic" of this process is what often reveals to us that what unites us is often greater than what divides us.

"So let us not be blind to our differences – but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy