

NM ADR NEWS

Encouraging communication through mutual respect

April – June 2009

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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NEW MEXICO
GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

ADR CURRENT EVENTS AND TRAINING

1. MONTHLY BROWN BAG LUNCH PRESENTATION SERIES. No-cost lunch-time presentations on ADR-related topics by subject matter experts; participants will receive practical information for immediate use:

- **April 29th (Wed), 12 noon – 1pm, in Albuquerque:** Presenter: Phillip Crump, 2nd Judicial District Court: “Mediation Program Management Strategies.”
- **May 6th (Wed), 12 noon – 1 pm, in Taos:** Presenter: Dr. Douglas Scott, Deer Oaks EAP, “Respect in the Workplace.”
- **June 16th (Tues), 12 noon – 1 pm, in Santa Fe:** Presenter: Jey Starke, NM TRD, on communication skills.

Please contact maria.voyles@state.nm.us for more information or to register for these presentations.

2. LABOR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS TRAINING. The Albuquerque Area Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, in partnership with state government, is presenting 3-day training programs statewide. This no-cost training, presented to managers from agencies with collective bargaining agreements in place, was designed to improve labor-management relationships through the development of collaborative problem-solving approaches. Skills learned in this training will enable participants to jointly respond to change and makes future mediation efforts more effective. *Tentative training schedule for the 3-Day Labor Management Relations Training: Raton: April 21, 28-29; Santa Fe: May 19, 27-28; Las Cruces: June 2, 9-10; and Farmington: June 16, 23-24. Please contact the ADR Bureau if you are interested in pre-registering for any of these FMCS trainings.*

3. “CONFLICT, COMMUNICATION & CHANGE: Dealing With Differences in the Workplace” Training in Las Cruces. The GSD/RMD ADR Bureau is partnering with New Mexico State University to present a 16-hour customized course on workplace conflict management. *Session 1: Mon. & Tues. 4/27-28/2009, 8:30AM – 4:30PM; Session 2: Wed. & Thurs. 4/29 – 4/30/2009, 8:30 AM – 4:30PM. Presenter: Cynthia Olson, assisted by Federico Zerger. Location: Las Cruces Workforce Development Center, 2345 E. Nevada Ave., Las Cruces, NM. Cost: \$195.00, including cost of training materials. To register, please contact: Martha Garcia at (575) 646-2420 / marthgar@nmsu.edu. Registration is limited to 25 participants per session on a first come, first served basis.*

4. MEDIATION TRAINING AT SFCC: This fall, the ADR Bureau will once again schedule a one-week, 40-hour Beginning Mediation and Conflict Resolution Skills course at the Santa Fe Community College, taught by Keith Melton, Reese Fullerton and MaryLouise Romero; dates will be announced soon. Please contact the ADR Bureau at maria.voyles@state.nm.us to pre-register for this class. A full-semester course will also be taught by Anne DeLain Clark and Kelly Hill (Tuesdays, 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm, August 25th – December 8th, 2009); for more information, please contact Anne directly at 660-9912.

5. ADR ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING. Wednesday, June 3rd, 10 -11:30 am in Santa Fe at the Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department (located at the Wendell Chino Building, 1220 South St. Francis Drive, 1st floor Porter Hall).

Please contact our Office for more information on any of the above items.

THE BEST MEDICINE?



A cowboy rode into town and stopped at the saloon for a drink. The locals loved picking on strangers, which he was. After finishing his drink and stepping outside, he learned his horse had been stolen. He walks back into the bar, flips his gun in the air, catching it above his head without even looking, and fires a shot into the ceiling.

“Which one of you sidewinders stole my horse!?!?” he yells out forcefully. No one answered. “Alright, I’m gonna have another drink, and if my horse ain’t back outside by the time I finish, I’m gonna do what I dun in Texas! And I don’t like doing what I dun in Texas!”

As the locals shifted restlessly, true to his word, the cowboy finished his second drink, walked outside, and found his horse tied back to the post. As he saddled up to ride out of town, the bartender, being curious, wanders out of the bar and asks, “Say pardner, before you ride off...what happened in Texas?” Turning back, the cowboy responds, “I had to walk home.”

Since the start of April is traditionally designated April Fools day, and the word *fool* is also a verb meaning to joke or fool around, this issue is devoted to the lighter side of life. Why is humor at work important and how can it help our work environment? Some research studies and statistics help answer this question. One study found that children, on average, laugh about 400 times a day, while adults laugh only about 15 times daily. When you add in the workplace pressures of deadlines, stressful relations and high-paced environments, the incidence of laughter at work can often be even less common . . . yet more reason to make a conscious effort to look for, even interject, humor into your workplace.

A survey, by Accountemps, showed that 96% of executives thought that people with a sense of humor do better at jobs than those with little or no sense of humor. Conversely, Robert Haft International found that only 15% of workers were fired for incompetence, while the remaining 85% were let go because of their inability to get along with fellow employees (we all know *those* people). Another survey found that, after incorporating humor into the workplace, employee turnover dropped 21% and Friday absenteeism fell by 38%. Numerous studies show that people who enjoy their work are more productive and creative, and experience greater job satisfaction.

These findings are supported by the medical profession, which has long acknowledged the healing aspects of humor in relieving stress, tension and anxiety, and enhancing communication, all goals that fit well into any workplace. Laughter really may be the best medicine: a good laugh lowers blood pressure, exercises the lungs, increases oxygen to all parts of the body, and stimulates endorphins, our built-in painkiller. When we laugh, we feel better, both physically and psychologically, which naturally affects our work and those around us; a little comic relief can help dissolve a tense or gloomy atmosphere.

An important caution, however: humor should be used *only* when it is appropriate, tasteful and in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Humor that is at the expense of others or hostile and disparaging to gender, ethnic, cultural or racial groups is offensive and has no business anywhere or anytime. Humor with sexual references can be highly offensive, particularly in the workplace; if it is even potentially offensive to anyone, avoid it. Instead, we should use affiliative or enhancing humor that is non-hostile, sometimes self-deprecating, positive and always life affirming. One mediator, during opening remarks, generated a sense of ease and camaraderie by telling the disputing parties, “*The bathrooms are down the hall on the left. No one is allowed to go there until we have reached a solution.*” He reported that his remark helped open a path of communication and openness between the parties.

Author, mediator and negotiator William Ury writes and speaks about “going to the balcony” as taking the time and space to temporarily distance ourselves from difficult discussions or situations; it allows us to regain our composure, control our emotions and the natural impulse to respond or strike back with anger, or walk away from discussions. In a similar fashion, we should also consider “going to the comedy shop” as a means of reducing tension, breaking down barriers, maintaining perspective and de-escalating conflict. Humor can be a powerful tool for building more cohesive work groups and minimizing differences between team members and co-workers. Shared laughter and a spirit of fun often generate a bonding process in which people feel closer together, especially when laughing in the midst of adversity or stressful times. Humor, or a light hearted approach, allows us to be more relaxed, approachable and comfortable with one another and the often serious nature of our work.

MEDIATION HUMOR FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT:

Question: *Why did the mediator cross the road?*

Answer: *To see the other side.*

Question: *How many mediators does it take to change a light bulb?”*

Mediator: *So what I hear you saying is that you would like the room to be brighter.”*

1st Mediator: *“So how was your mediation between the two parties dissolving their heating and air conditioning business?”*

2nd Mediator: *“Not so well; they just wouldn’t stop venting.”*

“The human race is the only species that has the ability to laugh at itself, or needs to.” — Mark Twain