

Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center

360.676.0122 | whatcomdrc.org | 13 Prospect Street, Ste. 201 | Bellingham, WA 98225



2013 Annual Report

Our Vision

For Whatcom County to be a community in which people approach conflict in creative and healthy ways.

Our Mission

To provide and promote constructive and collaborative approaches to conflict through mediation, training, facilitation and community education.



Celebrating a year of growth and impact.

Our 22nd year of serving Whatcom County with comprehensive conflict management services was filled with a robust mix of new endeavors, new partnerships, and new staff!

Highlights include:

- Providing the most mediations ever in our history – 255 cases and 281 sessions! That's a 5% increase over the previous year.
- Creating a new partnership with Shuksan Middle School, in which we are offering a Restorative Justice training to help students take responsibility and understand the impact of their actions, all in an effort to support the school to reduce out of school suspensions.
- Beginning the Peaceful Poetry Youth Contest. The entries were fantastic and thanks to the City of Bellingham, videos of these creative students are on our website.
- Expanding access to our services by formalizing a referral relationship with Law Advocates' Tenant Clinic. We now will be able to ensure low -income tenants have more direct access to mediation as a means to address potential eviction issues.
- Growing our pool of volunteer mediators by certifying 2 new mediators.
- Hosting our most successful Peace Builder Awards Gala ever – honoring people and programs in 8 incredible categories and raising record funds to support our programming.
- Hiring new staff to help us advance our strategic goals.
- Engaging in important work statewide through Resolution Washington; including helping to develop a roadmap for statewide collaborative efforts surrounding the Foreclosure Fairness Act Mediation Program.

As Thoreau once said, "Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?" What a wonderful and powerful statement to bear in mind as we continue to bring neighbors, families, and co-workers together to talk through their most intimate, most public, and most pressing disputes; all the while supporting them to more fully understand one another's experiences, identify their interests, and resolve their conflicts to mutual satisfaction.

Warm Regards,

Moonwater
Executive Director

We Value impartiality, accessibility, empowerment, collaboration, communication, & integrity.

Why We're Here

The Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, founded in 1992 by volunteers committed to "rehumanizing conflict." In 1993, Whatcom County Council designated us as Whatcom County's Dispute Resolution Center under Washington State RCW 7.75, recognizing the WDRC to provide mediation services as an alternative to the court system. Twenty-two years later, everything that we do at the WDRC is because we believe in constructive and collaborative approaches to conflict. Like our founders, we are striving for a community in which:

- **Our community members are empowered to reach lasting and amicable solutions to conflict and are equipped with necessary skills to manage conflict productively,**
- **Resources exist for divorcing parents to encourage a thoughtful transition for parents and children, and**
- **Our schools have access to workshops to build skills in young people to work through conflict in healthy and collaborative ways.**

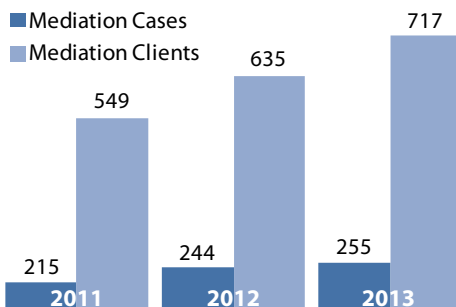
While conflict and violence continues to permeate the media, our homes, and our community, we envision a community in which people approach conflict in creative and healthy ways and will continue to work to meet the evolving needs of Whatcom County.

Conflict Intervention Services

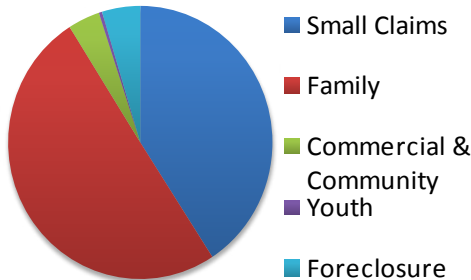
Recognizing that conflict is a normal and natural part of life, the WDRC is committed to providing intervention services when individuals need assistance with conflicts they are experiencing. To that end, the WDRC provides mediation, facilitation, and conflict coaching services for a variety of cases, including: dissolutions, parenting plans, small claims, neighbor-to-neighbor, victim-offender, workplace, landlord-tenant, foreclosure and more.

Mediation

Mediation empowers clients to reach mutually beneficial, lasting solutions through challenging conversations guided by a professionally trained mediator.



2013 Mediation Cases



"I feel secure and happy and my fears were relieved and questions answered. This was one of the best decisions I could have made."

-Family Mediation Client

"We use Dispute Resolution as much as possible in our management business."

-Commercial Mediation Client

"Professional, thoughtful, fair—mediator was so helpful in understanding all aspects of this process."

-Small Claims Mediation Client

"Very respectful atmosphere; polite, courteous mediators who had a solid working knowledge of this case and the issues surrounding it."

-Foreclosure Mediation Client



In 57% of family mediation cases in 2013, at least 1 party accessed our sliding-scale services.



Reaching resolution isn't the whole story. Of our 717 mediation participants in 2013

- 99%** Found the mediators fair and impartial
- 85%** Said mediation improved their situation
- 87%** Said mediation improved communication
- 95%** Were satisfied with the outcome and process



The WDRC served 8269 people across Whatcom County in 2013



Conflict Prevention Services

On a prevention level, the WDRC seeks to build the capacity of community members to better manage conflict as it arises, and to learn ways to minimize the possibility of it occurring. To this end, the WDRC offers training for adults and youth, all in an effort to build skills and reduce unproductive conflict.

Adult Classes

Our conflict resolution classes build skills all adults need to communicate effectively and resolve conflict proactively and peacefully.

50 Workshops | **1090** Training Participants

The impact of our adult classes according to participants:
100% of Professional Mediation participants felt they understood 8-stage mediation
93% of Understanding Conflict participants gained effective communication skills
92% of Helping Children through Family Changes clients found the class helpful

"Our team in the Western Washington University HR Dept. endorses this training. It's mandatory for anyone in the dept."

-Professional Mediation Training Participant

"I learned practical, valuable strategies and concepts for living with and being productive in conflicts. The class was helpful, and easy to follow and understand."

-Understanding Conflict Workshop Participant

The class was superb. I came grudgingly. I'm leaving with appreciation. A gift from WA!"

-Helping Children through Family Changes Seminar Participant

"Conflict resolution is extremely important for office environments. I've been to many conflict resolution trainings and this is by far the best."

-Workplace Training Participant



Youth Program

Our youth program empowers young people to build healthy relationships and resolve conflict without aggression.

58 workshops, 558 youth served
in schools, the juvenile court system, and organizations

100% of our core youth workshops are free

The impact of our youth workshops:

- 88% Learned ways of solving problems without hurting others
- 87% Reported increased problem solving skills
- 79% Have new skills they can use to share how they think & feel
- 87% Have a better understanding of the root of conflict



"It gave me better ideas on how to solve issues and to understand people better."

-Adolescent Girl

"They taught me that you don't have to be aggressive to solve problems"

-Dealing with Conflict Participant

"I use the 'cool down' technique and it helped so I don't overact about conflict."

-Adolescent Boy

"It helped me get better strategies to resolving conflicts, and new friends I can trust."

-Healthy Choices for Girls Participant



Reaching Resolution - A Mediation Story

The Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC) is a place where families can move forward together when difficult situations hit home. This year, we mediated a case in which the mother of four adult siblings developed Alzheimer's. As her children struggled with the grief of the diagnosis, they also had to deal with the pragmatic obstacles of the progressive disease. Conflict erupted. Each of the siblings held a different perspective about how to care for their mother. They all shared concerns about how her finances were being handled. The strain damaged their communication and relationships with one another, and fractures surfaced in what was once a close-knit family. This is not a remarkable situation—but a common one—of a family that cares deeply about their mother and her well-being.



Mediation provided this family an opportunity to sit down together, listen to each other's concerns, and to problem solve as a family. At the WDRC they built a communication plan, chose to hire a caregiver, and came to agreement on how to establish clear accounting for the estate. "Family issues are common, particularly around care of parents. Mediation can be so helpful, and certainly was in this situation," the WDRC mediator commented. A situation that could have resulted in a divisive court battle and broken family ties instead ended in concrete next steps that everyone agreed upon. One client commented, **"The mediators did an excellent job—very fair—and summarized these issues well."** Most importantly, while reeling from a heart-wrenching diagnosis and entering into a new stage in their family, these siblings moved forward together in support of one another and their mother.

Expressing Empathy - A Youth Workshop Story

My name is Rebecca, and I am currently serving as an AmeriCorps member for the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. The goal of my AmeriCorps role is to increase problem solving, conflict resolution, and communication skills in youth between fourth and twelfth grade. Our Youth Program Coordinator Emily, myself, and our volunteer facilitators primarily engage with youth through two venues; in Whatcom County classrooms, or youth are referred to the Center by a Juvenile Probation Officer in the Whatcom County Court system.

This fall, a high school football player was referred to the program by his probation officer. He had committed a sexualized crime that targeted a female at his school. My own experience working with victims of domestic violence presented some personal challenges for me to overcome with this student. However, throughout our month working together we carefully built a foundation of trust and care.

One day, towards the end of his program, we were discussing the pressures that girls and guys face during their teenage years to act and look a certain way. Eating disorders were, and are, a sadly frequent occurrence in high school girls. With wide eyes he asked me if I had ever known a girl with an eating disorder when I was in high school. I was shocked but not surprised by his question. Adolescence is an age when female and male students go through very different struggles.



Through articulate, vulnerable, and honest discussion we were able to explore the barriers to communication between the genders at his school. **By the end of our time together he was expressing empathy towards the experiences of female students at his school and an interest in building bridges between divergent groups.** It is a privilege to facilitate, be witness to, and experience such a shift in outlook. Overcoming our own internal barriers to understanding is no easy feat. I am so glad that through my service I get to walk that road with youth every day.

- Rebecca Pisciotta, AmeriCorps Youth Program Specialist



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Serving every Whatcom County resident with high impact services, and a low impact budget

2013 WDRRC Funding

Assets

Total Checking/Savings:	\$108,360
Total Accounts Receivable:	\$20,954
Total Fixed Assets:	\$18,364
Total Other Assets:	\$17,618
Total Assets :	\$165,296

Liabilities

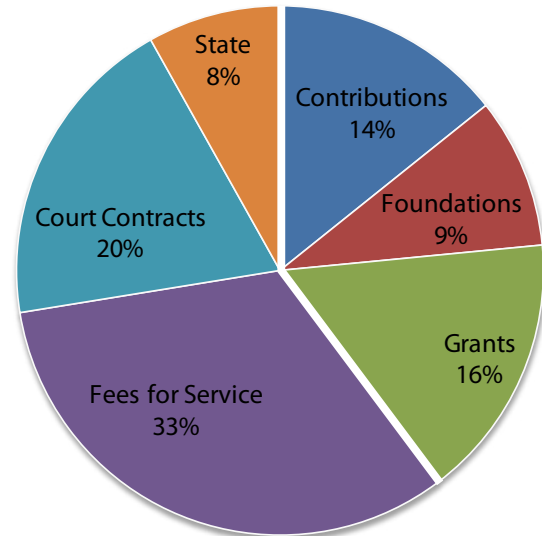
Total Liabilities:	\$2,102
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Equity

Fund Balance:	\$148,156
Net Income:	\$15,037
Total Equity:	\$163,194
Total Liabilities & Equity:	\$165,296

Revenue by Source

Total Income: \$366,782

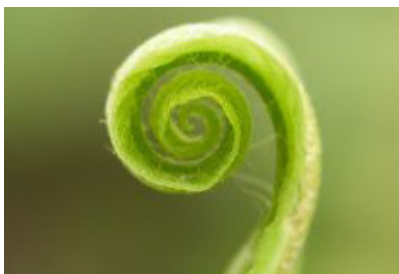


39% of our budget depends on community support

MAGNIFY THE IMPACT

Be a part of peace building in Whatcom County & help the WDRRC provide essential services to those most in need

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we offer sliding-scale services and never turn away anyone due to financial hardship. Nearly 40% of our budget depends on the generosity of donors like you. Make a tax-deductible contribution online at www.whatcomdrc.org/donate, or by mail to 13 Prospect St. Ste 201 Bellingham, WA. 98225.



- \$25 pays the admin. fees for Mediation, helping a client take a step towards resolution
- \$45 allows a parent to take our Helping Children Through Family Changes Seminar
- \$85/mo. provides for 10 students to participate in a Youth Program workshop
- \$130 provides 1 hour of Mediation Services to help a family resolve conflict
- \$200 provides homeowners the opportunity to participate in Foreclosure Mediation
- \$550 sponsors an individual to participate in our Professional Mediation Training

Sponsor, donate, or participate in a WDRRC fundraising event

- Cribbage Tournament, Sept. 13
- Peace Builder Awards Gala, Nov. 14
- Bocce Tournament, April 18, 2015

More events to be announced.
Check out our event calendar online for details & updates or email Iris at outreach@whatcomdrc.org.

Fred Meyer Rewards & Amazon Smile

Fred Meyer and Amazon will donate a portion of proceeds to the WDRRC at no cost to you! Link your Fred Meyer Rewards Card at fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Link your Amazon account at smile.amazon.com.



In-Kind Donations

We gratefully accept donations for our programs so we can focus our budget on providing services to those most in need. Find on-going donation needs on our Target wish-list or at whatcomdrc.org/donate.



We are grateful for the support of our 2013 donors and sponsors

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*We deeply appreciate all of our supporters and regret any omissions.

Special Thanks to our 2013 Major Contributors

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In 2013
100
volunteers gave
4662
hours to the WDRC



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