



DRS DIALOGUE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2 • AUGUST 2023

DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA



parent education

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

DAN WASSINK,
DRS MANAGER

ANN WARSHAUER,
PARENT ED.
COORDINATOR

When you think about the Dispute Resolution Services (DRS) office, mediation is probably the first thing that comes to mind. But did you know that DRS also manages Virginia's Parent Education program?

Since 2000, parent education seminars have been required for all parties to a petition where child custody, visitation or support is contested. These four-hour seminars must, at a minimum, address the effects of separation or divorce on children, parenting responsibilities, options for conflict resolution and financial responsibilities.

Parent education encourages parents and other guardians to focus on the well-being of their children rather than interpersonal conflict. In this way, the seminars “prime the pump” for mediation and increase the likelihood that an agreement will be reached without the need for further litigation.

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New law returns oversight to DRS

Effective July 1, 2023, educators who conduct parent education seminars must be approved by the Office of the Executive Secretary. Approval by the local court is no longer necessary. This change, passed unanimously by both chambers of the General Assembly, restores the intent of the original law that mandated the seminars in 2000. In response to the new law, DRS is revising its application process, as well as other administrative duties. A new application and updated guidelines will be available soon on our website: Parent Education (vacourts.gov)

Parent Education Symposium

DRS is also looking forward to its first Parent Educators Symposium since 2019. The date will be Friday, November 3, 2023 at the Hanover Public Safety Training Center. This is an excellent opportunity for parent educators to network and receive continuing education. Guest speakers from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services will discuss how stress, high conflict and trauma impact children and families, and ways parents can mitigate the effects on children. The agenda, from 9:00 to 3:00, is packed with opportunities for sharing information and resources and learning new ways to help parties who attend our seminars. More information and how to register will be sent to parent education providers soon. In the meantime, if you have any questions, you can contact Ann Warshauer at awarshauer@vacourts.gov

Breaking News!

The Virginia Law Foundation has generously awarded Resolution Virginia an \$8,000 grant to cover some or all of the cost (\$50 per person maximum) of the parent education seminar for people who earn \$30,000 or less, or who indicate that the seminar fee would be a hardship. Funds can be used for this purpose through December, 2023. Contact Resolution Virginia member centers through the www.ResolutionVirginia.org website to take advantage of this opportunity.

VA FUNDING REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY MEDIATION

CHRISTINE POULSON,
RESOLUTION VIRGINIA

RESOLUTION VIRGINIA *an alliance for peaceful communities*

In June, Resolution Virginia representatives met with staff from Community Mediation Maryland (Takoma Park), the Baltimore Community Mediation Center and the Maryland Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (Annapolis) to study the good work being done in Maryland through its community mediation centers. A take-away from those meetings was that, with adequate funding, Virginia's community mediation centers can help expand the use of ADR in Virginia and help resolve issues before they reach the level of police or court involvement.

This fall, Resolution Virginia, its member centers, and center supporters will ask Virginia's state legislators to provide financial support for Virginia's community mediation centers. We hope to meet with all of Virginia's 140 legislators before the winter legislative session. If you would like to join these meetings or support this effort in another way, including by contacting your legislator, please let us know by contacting Resolution Virginia's Executive Director, Christine Poulson, at info@resolutionvirginia.org or (540) 294-0732, for a set of talking points.

And if you would like to be connected with a community mediation center in other ways, perhaps as a volunteer, please let us know that as well. The level of discord and violence in Virginia is unacceptable. Please help us get ahead of it and offer Virginians a non-adversarial option for dispute resolution at the earliest stage possible.

EVPS: FIRST LOOK

JON LAMP,
ADR PROGRAMS SPECIALIST

QUICK FACTS

- **Overview**

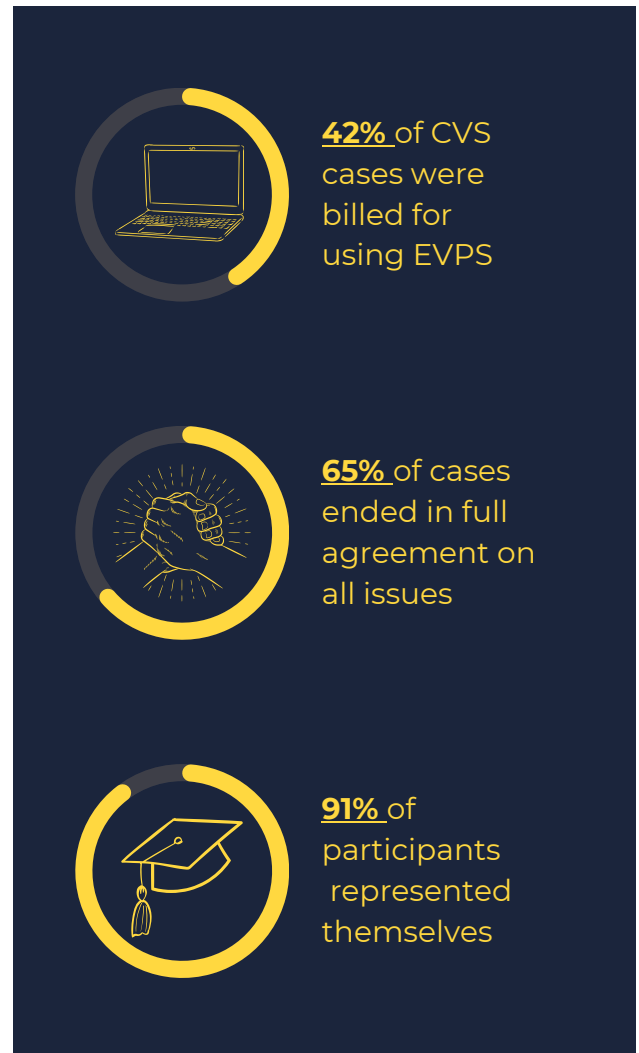
An estimated 42% of custody, visitation, and support (CVS) cases were billed for using the Electronic Voucher Payment System (EVPS) in June and July.

- **Participants**

- 89% of EVPS submissions reported their participants
- 91% of plaintiffs and defendants reported via EVPS submission were self-represented.
- Around 60% of submissions that reported participants also reported that all participants to the mediation attended virtually.

- **Case Results**

- 65% of cases ended in full agreement on all issues
- 4% of cases ended in a partial agreement or a provisional/unsigned agreement



Our first batch of data has come in from the new EVPS payment program for mediators, and it's already exciting the kind of information that we can get from the new data! A few key insights are reflected in the graphics and quick facts above. Along with the data collected from EVPS, we hope that those of you using this system in the field are finding it easy to use, and that it's an improvement over the DC-40 vouchers. For those having issues, or if you've been hesitant about signing up, we've collected a few frequently asked questions about the system that you may find helpful.

EVPS: FIRST LOOK (CONT.)

HOW DO I REGISTER FOR AN ACCOUNT WITH EVPS?

You can find a link to EVPS on the VA Courts website (vacourts.gov) under Online Services > [Electronic Voucher Payment System \(EVPS\)](#). To create a new account, you must be an active OES vendor. You should contact OES's Accounts Payable Department at (804) 225-3346 to complete documentation needed to become an OES vendor. If you are a vendor, you will need to reach out to your local Clerk's Office to receive an OES Identification Number, which will expire 48 hours after issued. If you or your clerk has any questions about registration, please contact OES's support email for EVPS at evpssupport@vacourts.gov. (Pages 1-3 of the EVPS Mediator User Manual)

SHOULD I SUBMIT TWO EVPS INVOICES IF I MEDIATE CUSTODY, VISITATION, AND SUPPORT ISSUES FOR MEDIATION?

No. A mediation should only be billed for on a single submission, irrespective of the issues mediated or the number of children discussed in mediation. If you were referred multiple appointments to mediate (like custody/visitation and support), you should first complete the information for the first appointment and all of the mediation-related information. Once you have done so, select the "Save as Draft" button. A message will then appear, "Voucher saved successfully." Once the message appears, you can then select the "Add Case Number" button on the right side of the page, and fill out the information regarding the second appointment. (Page 29 of the EVPS Mediator User Guide).

IS EVPS AVAILABLE FOR GENERAL DISTRICT COURT MEDIATIONS?

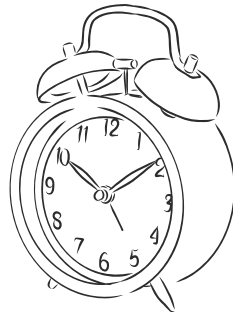
OES is currently working on expanding access to EVPS for GDC mediators using the MSPI form to bill for cases! Keep an eye out for more information from our office regarding this change!

RECERTIFICATION!

MICHAEL BARR,
ADR ANALYST

August marks the season all mediators certified in Virginia look forward to with anticipation and dread: RECERTIFICATION! DRS accepts applications from mediators to renew their certification before the new cycle begins November 1. Every other year, this period is (for some) the bane of their professional existence as they scramble to find courses and trainings that might be approved for Continuing Mediator Education (CME) credit.

Of course, it takes 10 hours of training – 8 hours non-ethics and 2 hours approved for mediator ethics credit – to renew your certification. If you have carryover credit, we accept up to 8 hours counted as non-ethics from your last round, so it could be an easy task. DRS has a calendar with Advanced Training courses to which you may refer to find training.



CME is beneficial for all mediators – those who are eager to learn and eager to teach. If you would like to train others in a subject you know well, we encourage you to develop a program to share your knowledge, insight, and skill.

How should mediators approach this season? The Guidelines, section D.6 advises: “A mediator should exercise discretion in choosing those approved trainings most likely to enhance his or her mediation skills and improve delivery of mediation services.” We at DRS hope you can approach this season with more wonder than dread as you learn, network, share, and refresh your strength for the mediations ahead. For more information and an FAQ, please see tabs on recertification under the Certification and Training section of the [DRS webpage](#).

DRS IN THE FIELD

DAN WASSINK,
DRS MANAGER

MICHAEL BARR,
ADR ANALYST

Our staff has taken advantage of several opportunities recently – with more to come – to educate court personnel and others about our services.

Pre-Bench Orientation

On June 13 and 14, Michael and Dan traveled to Newport News for week 2 of the annual Pre-Bench Orientation, attended by all new judges at the district and circuit court levels. This was a great opportunity to get in front of judges before they settled into their new roles on the bench.

What made these workshops especially effective was that Michael and Dan had a little help from their friends. Some BIG help actually. Chesapeake Circuit Court Judge Robert MacDonald and Fairfax County J&DR Court Judge Thomas Sotelo attended one or more of the three workshops (one for each type of court) to describe their experiences with mediation and tout its many benefits. The judges' enthusiasm and passion for mediation came through loud and clear and had a noticeable impact on the audience. Several of the new judges in attendance stayed after the workshops to learn more about ways they could utilize mediation (and parent education) in their courtrooms.

Landlord / Tenant Seminars

On June 15 and 20, Michael traveled to Petersburg to present on a panel discussion at the Petersburg Public Library, the first for Landlords and the second for Tenants. Pam Struss, past-president of Virginia Mediation Network and Adjunct Professor with George Mason University's Carter School, organized and promoted the events that featured panelists from the Virginia Apartment Management Association, Peoples Credit Union, the Legal Aid and Justice Center, and, of course, DRS. Impressing Library staff, over twenty persons showed for the Landlord Seminar to receive information on new legislation, building codes, credit management, housing education, and their rights and responsibilities.

Michael discussed mediation and the robust program in Virginia courts, emphasizing the opportunity a mediated settlement provides to collect or to develop a creative strategy to move forward. The Tenant Seminar was less well-attended but equally impactful toward increasing understanding of protections and remedies.

DRS IN THE FIELD (CONT.)

Still to Come

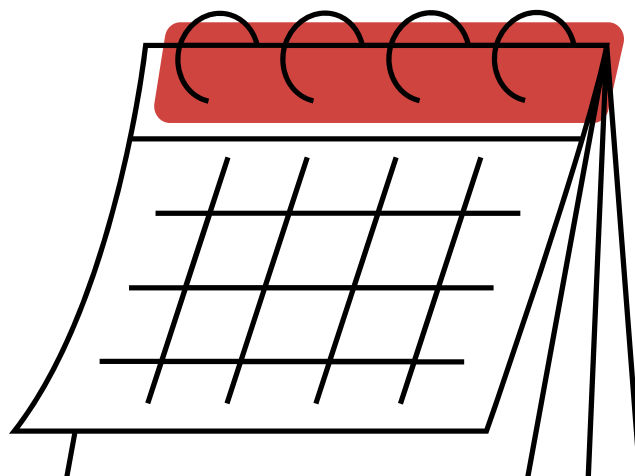
At the time this edition of DRS Dialogue was being prepared, Michael and Dan were preparing for a return engagement at the Judicial Management Program (JMP). The JMP, scheduled for August 8, 9 and 10 in Glen Allen, serves as an orientation for new GDC and J&DR clerks of court. The clerks receive an introduction to a broad range of topics, including the work done by DRS staff.

Just as in 2022, Michael and Dan will educate the clerks about mediation and parent education and encourage them to support these services as critical dispute resolution and access to justice tools. The session features a quiz show format (minus prizes!) to keep things as interactive as possible.

Finally, during the last week of August, Michael and Dan will make a road trip to Norfolk for the Judicial Conference of Virginia for District Courts. While not part of the official agenda, DRS will have a designated “exhibitor’s table.” Michael and Dan plan to show off DRS’ new promotional banner, offer a variety of informational documents, and encourage the judges to take advantage of the services DRS has to offer district courts in the Commonwealth.

NEED TRAINING?

check out our live online training calendar! Click below:



THANK YOU

for all you do!

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SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

Have an idea for a future article? Submit your ideas to disputeresolution@vacourts.gov.
As always, thank you for all you do for ADR in Virginia.

Dispute Resolution Services
