



DRC

Dispute
Resolution
Center of Austin

Dispute Resolution Center ANNUAL REPORT

October 1, 2024—September 30, 2025

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MISSION

The Dispute Resolution Center is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides and promotes accessible, high-quality dispute resolution services for all people in the Travis County Area and surrounding areas.

PHILOSOPHY

The Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) believes:

- ◆ People in our diverse community can best be served through a diverse organization.
- ◆ People can resolve their own disputes, and the DRC can encourage resolution by providing trained volunteers who are impartial.
- ◆ People who develop their own resolutions are more likely to do what they have agreed to do.
- ◆ People can use the experience gained at the DRC to resolve future disputes.

GOALS

- ◆ Provide accessible, high-quality mediation using community volunteer mediators.
- ◆ Evaluate and, as appropriate, implement additional dispute resolution services to meet community needs.
- ◆ Develop and maintain an organization that reflects the diverse population of Travis County.
- ◆ Serve the diverse population of Travis County.
- ◆ Provide training and continuing education for DRC Volunteers and Staff.
- ◆ Maintain positive relationships with the Travis County Commissioners Court, county agencies and departments, referral sources and related organizations.
- ◆ Promote public awareness of DRC services and accomplishments.
- ◆ Provide community education about dispute resolution.
- ◆ Ensure funding for the DRC and responsibly manage its resources.
- ◆ Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the DRC program.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board of Directors



Belinda Herrera

President



Sameer Shah

President-Elect



Deven Desai

Secretary



Katie Tousignant

Treasurer



Bettye Benten

Immediate Past President

Judge Catherine Mauzy

Judicial Representative

Judge Daniella Lyttle

At Large

Donna Holt

Volunteer Representative and
County Judge (Brown) Appointee

Fred Hawkins

At Large

Judge George Thomas

At Large

Heather Moreau

At Large

Karl Spock

At Large

Kent Caperton

At Large

Nadia Bettac

At Large

Renita Sanders

Pct. 1 (Travillion) Appointee

Renee Shiraishi

At Large

Susan Bergen Hart

Past President

Cr

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

STAFF 2024—2025



Erin Patterson
Executive Director



Guillermo Escorcia
HR & Finance Manager



Susan Sneller
Case Manager



David Huang
Director
Case Management &
Volunteer Services



Mindy Roeder
Case Manager

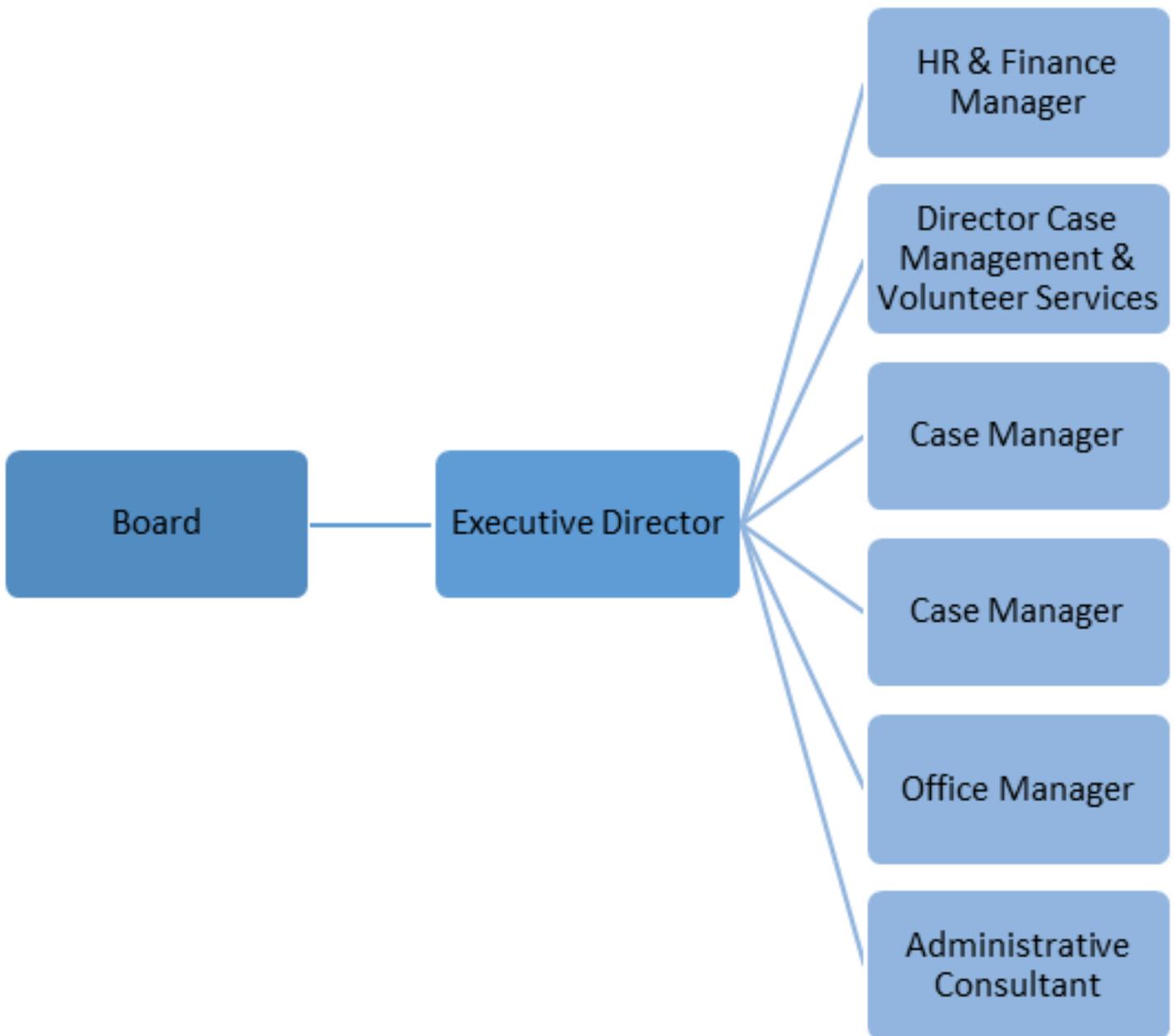


Rita Rancken
Office Manager



Patsy Shepherd
Administrative Consultant

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Happy Retirement, Lisa!



Lisa Weger joined the DRC in 1989. During her 36 years with the DRC, she served in a variety of roles, including Case Manager, Program Director, Office Administrator, Mediator, and Coach in the 40-hour Basic Mediation Training.

She served as Finance Director from 2000 until her retirement in early 2025.

Thank you for your many contributions through the years, Lisa! We will miss you, and we know you'll have a glorious time in your new life!

Welcome, Guillermo!



Guillermo Escorcía joined the DRC in early 2025. He was born and raised in Brownsville, Texas, which is a short drive to Mexico and South Padre Island.

He graduated with his Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management from the University of North Texas at Dallas and is aiming to graduate with his Master's in Human Resource Management in Fall 2026.

In his free time, Guillermo goes to Barton Springs for a swim, walks around with his Pomeranian, and goes to local coffee shops to study.

We are delighted to welcome Guillermo to the DRC team!

Executive Director's Highlights 2024 – 2025

- **Expanded Access to Mediation Services** - Continued to serve individuals and families throughout Travis County and the surrounding communities with strong outcomes. In FY 2024–2025, **over two-thirds of mediated cases resulted in settlement**, reflecting the effectiveness of DRC's approach, even as overall case volume fluctuated.
- **Advanced a Court Partnership and Office Relocation** - Made major progress toward relocating to the **Travis County Civil & Family Courts Facility**, including a formal space offer and multiple site visits with County leadership.
- **Launched and Strengthened Strategic Partnerships** - Deepened collaboration with Travis County departments and community partners and initiated a new mediation partnership with **Austin Police Oversight**, creating a pathway for resolving community complaints.
- **Grew and Supported a Strong Volunteer Mediator Community - Recruited 16 new volunteer mediators**, exceeding the annual recruitment goal of 10, and conducted a comprehensive volunteer survey to improve communication and engagement—resulting in positive feedback and stronger volunteer connection.
- **Delivered High-Quality Mediation Training** - Hosted multiple mediation trainings, including **40-hour Basic and 30-hour Family mediation programs, serving 88 participants** across FY 2024–2025, while implementing a trainer transition plan to sustain quality and expand future capacity.
- **Increased Community Demand Beyond Case Referrals** - Saw a **rise in inquiries, custom training requests, and room rental requests**, signaling growing recognition of DRC as a community resource.
- **Modernized Marketing and Increased Visibility** - Launched a redesigned website and refreshed branding, rebuilt DRC's LinkedIn presence, and increased **Google reviews by 25%**, strengthening public awareness and accessibility.
- **Strengthened Organizational Infrastructure and Leadership** - Successfully navigated staff transitions, updated internal policies and systems, and maintained service continuity.
- **Demonstrated Fiscal Stewardship and Forward Planning** - Managed County funding processes, submitted budget proposals to support relocation needs, pursued grant funding, and worked toward diversifying revenue streams to support long-term sustainability.

MEDIATION PROGRAMS

A SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Community Mediation Program: A service for individuals, groups, businesses, domestic partnerships, etc. that provides parties with mediators for four hours of mediation time and space at the Center. Typical cases include: family conflict, landlord/tenant, contract disputes, partnership dissolution, real estate, vendor-consumer, insurance, and neighborhood. Nominal administrative fees are charged per party per session and may be waived for parties with financial hardships or qualifying court referrals.

Civil Litigation Mediation Program: A mediation service for attorneys in the community for referring cases that have proceeded to an adversarial litigation process but are now in need of a more cost/time efficient manner of disposition. Attorneys are present and may request either an attorney or non-attorney solo practitioner. Private caucus (individual sessions) with the parties or just the advocates may be prevalent. Administrative fees are \$200.00 per party per session. Typical cases include: custody, property settlement, and visitation in divorces; business disputes; real estate; insurance; and employee grievances.

Arbitration Program: An arbitration service for attorneys and all individuals who desire an arbitrator to make a decision based on the facts of the case. Attorneys may be present as advocates and advisors of the parties' interests and legal rights. Witnesses may attend to support a party through testimony of facts involved in the dispute. Typical cases include: custody, divorce, property, and visitation issues; businesses; real estate; insurance; and employee grievances. Administrative fees are \$200.00 per party per session.

Juvenile Programs: The DRC has enjoyed a long and rewarding relationship with the Travis County Gardner-Betts Juvenile Justice Center, providing mediators as requested by the juvenile court judges.

The **Victim/Offender Program** was established in 1993 and provides an opportunity for juvenile offenders to mediate restitution for offenses against their victims with the help and neutrality/safety of mediators.

The **Parent/Child Pre-release Program** allows detained juveniles to meet with their families prior to release and returning to the home environment. This process facilitates open communication for the establishment of ground rules and an opportunity to reflect on needs of family members who have gone through the recent trauma of infractions, separation, and now the intervention of the police and court systems.

Facilitation Services: For groups with a desire to move forward in planning or dialoguing the challenges and opportunities they face, a neutral facilitator can assist in maintaining a safe and effective forum. Profit and non-profit/governmental rates are available.

While our focus remains on providing mediation to the community, how we accomplish our performance outcomes is more specifically delved into with the graphs on pages 11 through 14.

Since 1983 we have been offering mediation services to Travis County and the surrounding communities.

WE MEDIATE MANY TYPES OF DISPUTES

Neighbors

Barking Dogs / Noise

Property (Trees, Fences, etc.)

Landlord / Tenant

Roommates / Friends

HOA / Neighborhood / Community

Personal Injury / Property Damage

Contracts / Collections

Real Estate (Buyer / Seller)

Consumer / Merchant

Business Owners

Employer / Employee / Co-Workers

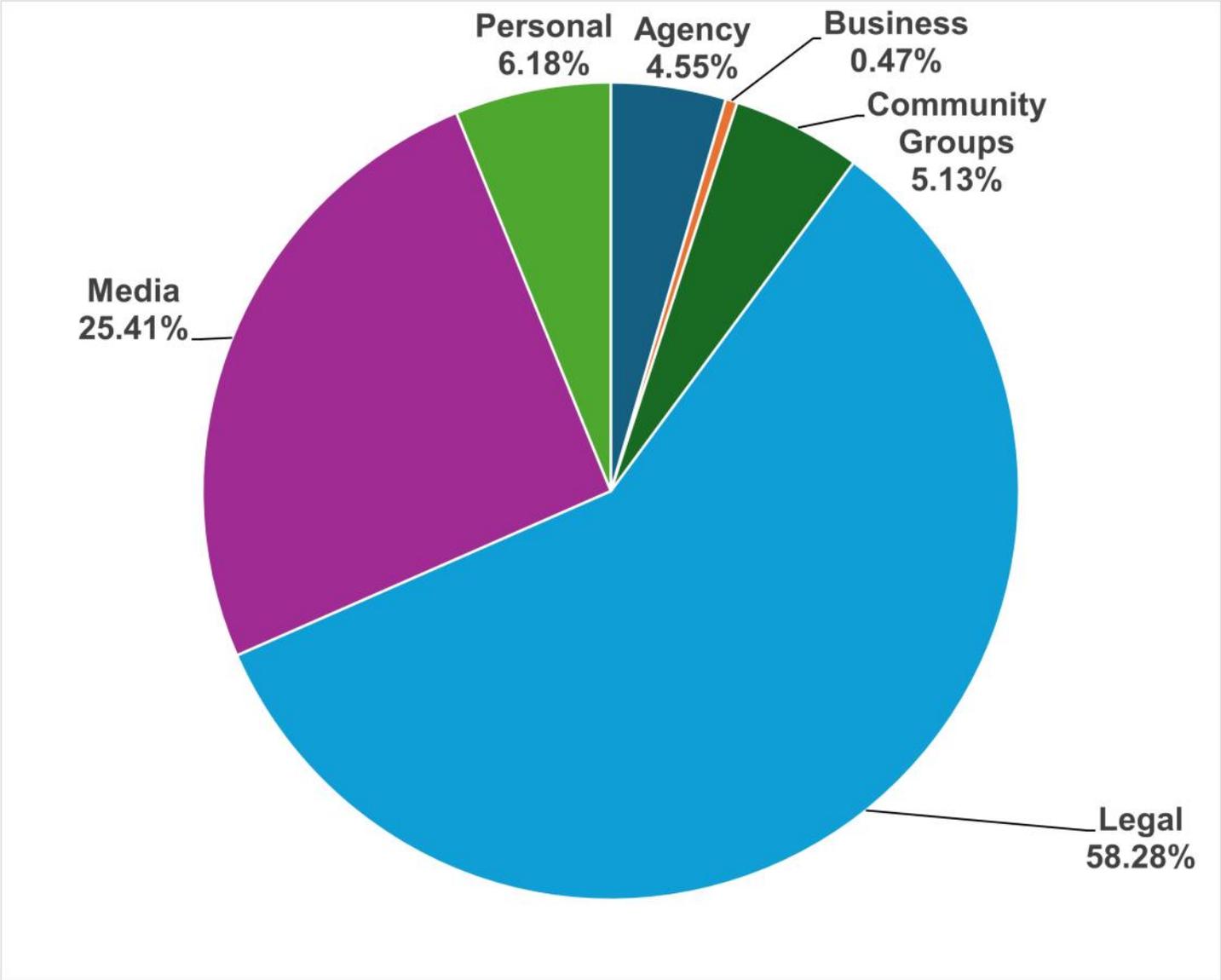
Pre-Divorce / Post-Divorce

Partners / Unmarried Parents

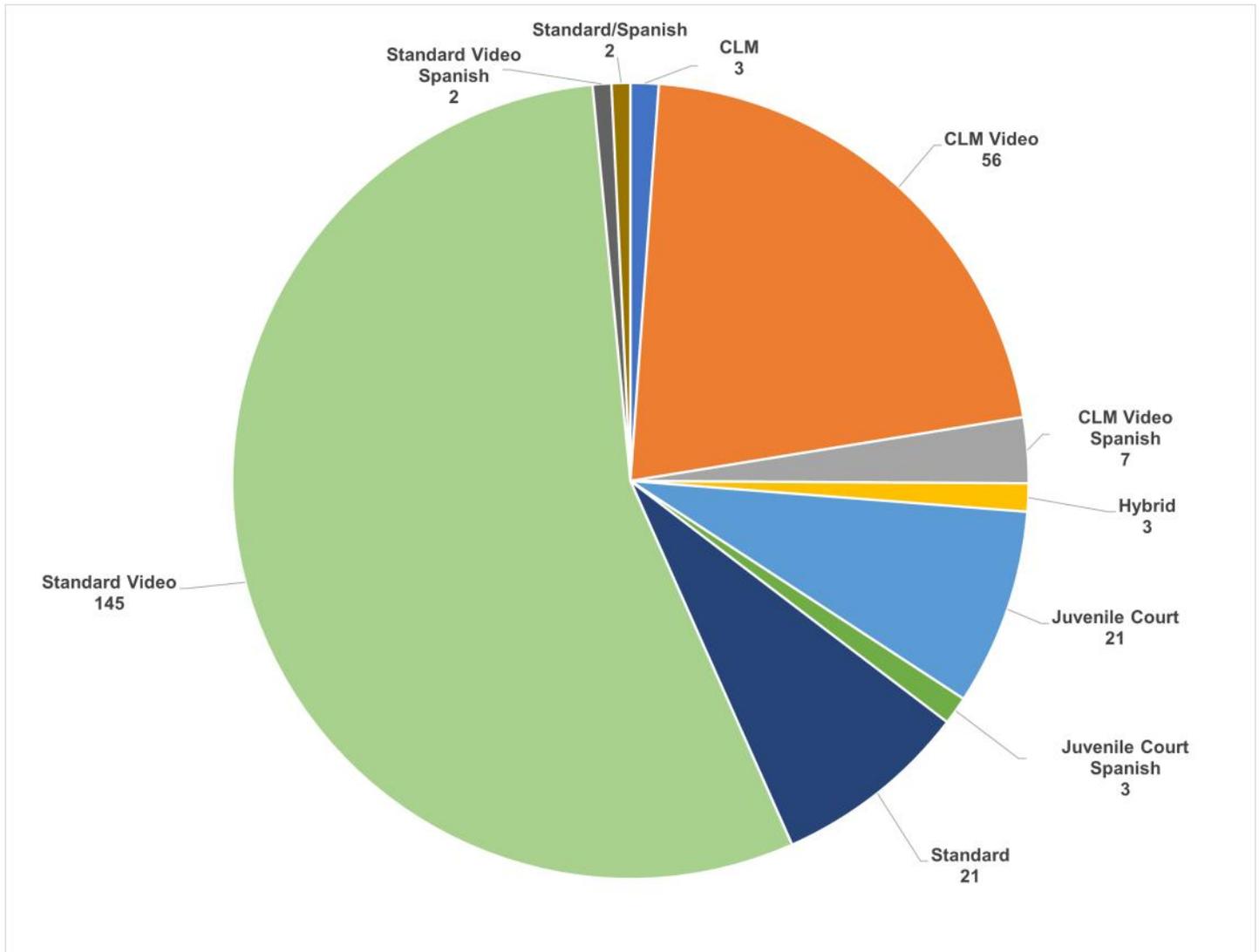
Relatives (Siblings, Parent / Child)

Elder / Family Issue / Estates ...and More

**REFERRAL SOURCE PERCENTAGES
OF 858 CASES OPENED
2024-2025**



264 TOTAL ADR SESSIONS HELD 2024-2025

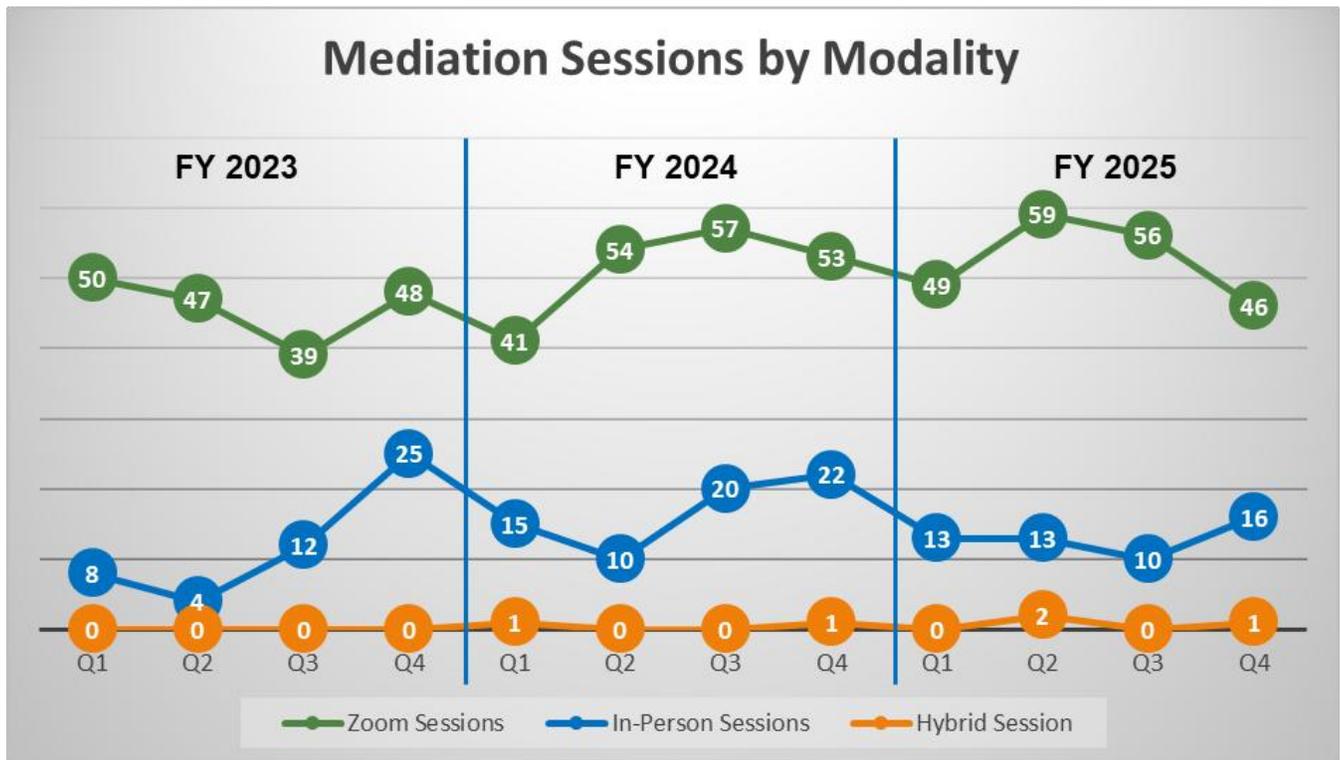


CLM = Civil Litigation Mediations

ADR Sessions by Modality

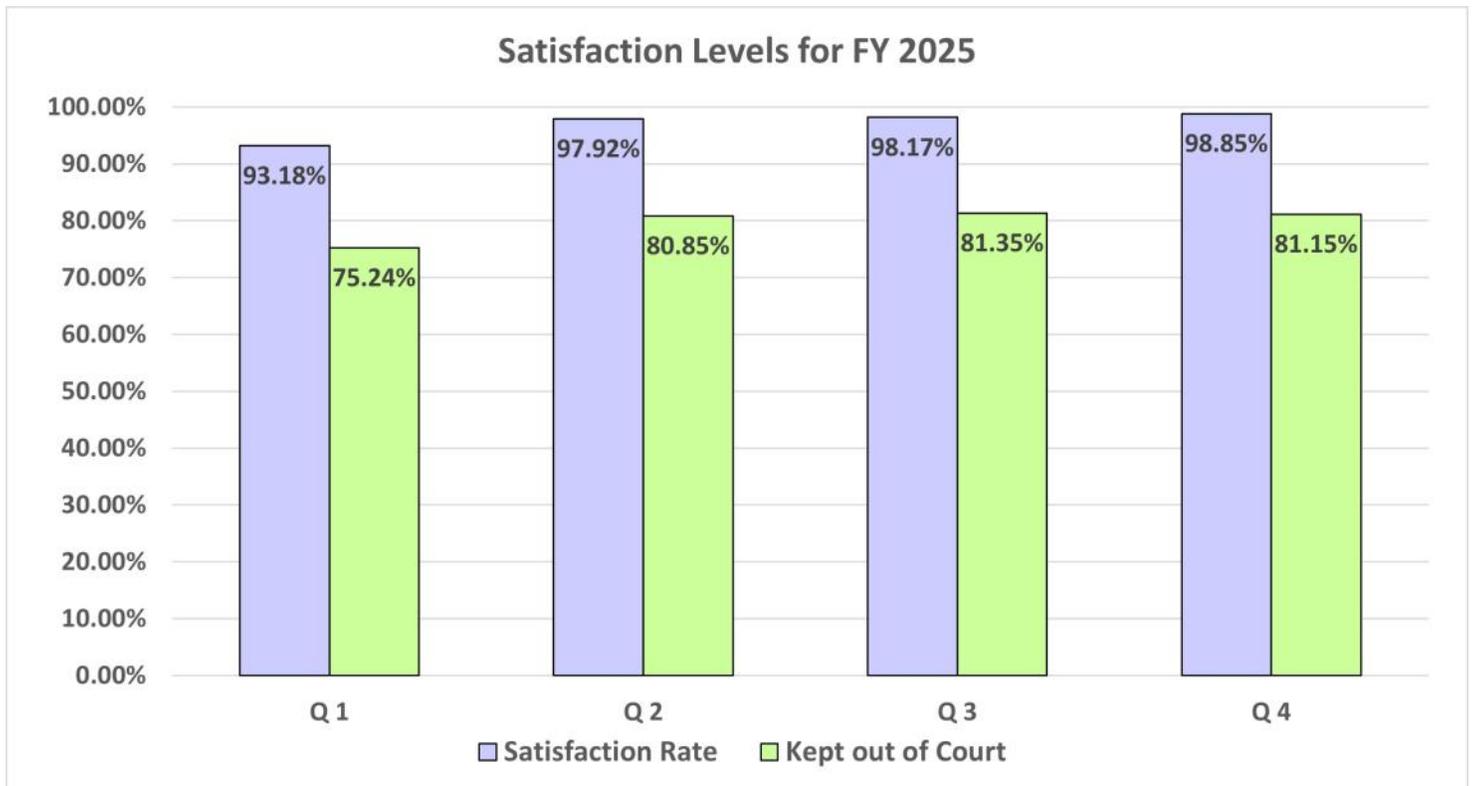
The increased demand for virtual ADR (alternative dispute resolution) sessions (mediations, arbitrations, or facilitations) has remained steady throughout this past year, as evidenced in the graph below. In response to this new trend, the DRC staff continues to work diligently on improving the services offered through this platform.

The DRC staff members collaborate with our mediators, arbitrators, and facilitators through the feedback they provide on how better to serve our clients during the online process. Our staff members also scrutinize the feedback received from participants through the comments they submit in the evaluation forms provided at the conclusion of each session.



SERVICES EVALUATION 2024 - 2025

Our court diversionary rate averaged 80%, and the overall satisfaction rate was 97%, confirming that these community services continue to satisfy the user while lessening the burden on the court.



“The mediators were very articulate, took time to explain and understand my clients’ issues, and helped the parties narrow down the issues in dispute. I liked that their approach emphasizes giving the clients a voice and encouraging them to be active participants in their mediation. It was a great experience for me to participate in as a young attorney.”

“Mediators did a great job keeping us on track despite some very close calls with both parties wanting to stop at least once. Helped avoid a messy court battle that neither side had the time or money for, kept the child from being put in the middle of the divorce.”

See more mediation evaluation comments on the next page.

SELECTED EVALUATION COMMENTS FROM MEDIATIONS

Evaluations are provided to participants at the end of each mediation held in person or via Zoom. Below are some of the comments we received this past year about both the mediations and our Mediators for mediations held through the DRC office and through the Gardner Betts Juvenile Justice Center, as well as about our Case Managers, who coordinate the administrative functions for the mediations.

Mediators and the Mediations at the DRC

Very thoughtful about the “people” part of a high-intensity situation. Opened perspective on the core issues in the dispute, which helps toward a better outcome.

The mediation provided a space for us to discuss issues in a neutral environment. It helps to know that this is a place we can discuss issues as they arise in our personal lives.

I really didn't think this case could be settled. I'm impressed that it did.

It allowed me to end a contentious 2-year-long divorce process.

Neutral safe space to meet, community centered. Perspective sharing, having a safe space to have my voice heard. Thank you.

Professional, diligent, and direct. It relieved some stress and provided a neutral atmosphere.

Reduced stress level of going to court.

The mediators were focused on the details and were very considerate and impartial. They were very calm and continued to hold the conversation when it felt at a standstill.

It helped us think about creative solutions.

I cannot fully express just how great our mediators were. I am impressed at the level of professionalism, knowledge, and hard work both of them displayed at our mediation.

It was nice to voice my concerns without being yelled at or anything of that nature. The mediator was awesome!

Saved a dear friendship.

Saved client time and limited resources; also relieved stress.

It helped me understand that there may be a way to reach an agreement through incorporating things that are important to the children.

Mediators and the Mediations at Juvenile Court

It help[ed] me understand my goals in life and how my mom is my biggest advocate.

Allowed all to speak in detail. I felt heard.

It helped us understand our problems and start to resolve them.

Helped me express my wants and boundaries in a respectful manner.

To communicate and make an agreement with my grandma and great grandma.

[Mediator was] very understanding and good at redirecting if necessary. Very warm and made us feel safe.

Helped us clarify the real reason for it — that we want stability and trust to return to our family unit and to continue to work toward a bright future for our son.

DRC Case Managers: David, Mindy, and Susan

Great job getting session scheduled and helping with communication with other party.

Case manager was helpful in explaining the process to someone that has never been in this situation so I knew what to expect.

Case manager is on top of things! Very prompt, respectful, and helpful.

The case manager was very responsive and communicative about scheduling the mediation.

Case manager was clear, timely, and made the entire process simple for me and my clients.

DRC always makes it a very delightful and smooth process from the beginning to scheduling a mediation.

TRAININGS

40-Hour Basic Mediation Training

This course is a 5-day training offered to the general public several times each year. This course is designed to give individuals the skills and credentials they need to serve as a mediator in the State of Texas. The training focuses on the Community-Based Mediation model. Individuals actively participate in practice mediation following each lecture session, and certificates are provided to participants upon completion of the course.



What Participants Learn:

- Key considerations in setting up a mediation.
- A seven-stage mediation process based on the theory of interest-based negotiation.
- Specific communication skills to assist the negotiation process.
- Management of face-to-face negotiations between the parties.
- Guidelines for working with attorneys in the mediation session.
- Use of individual sessions as a tool to facilitate problem solving.
- Ethical considerations for mediation practice.



Diane M. Harvey, LCSW
TMCA Credentialed Advanced Mediator
Your Trainer in
June & November



Walter Wright, J.D., LL.M
TMCA Credentialed Mediator
Your Trainer in
February, April, & September

Your Trainers

TRAININGS (Continued)

30-Hour Advanced Family Mediation Training



The Advanced Family Mediation Training is 30 hours of instruction fulfilling the Texas ADR Act requirements for mediators doing court-ordered family mediations. The course follows the standards set by the Texas Mediation Trainers Roundtable. Sessions include family law, family dynamics, domestic violence, and child development, with ethical and practical considerations in a combined lecture and role play environment. 40-Hour Basic Mediation Training is required prior to taking this course.

Your Trainer



Diane M. Harvey, LCSW
TMCA Credentialed
Advanced Mediator

TRAININGS (Continued)

Customized Training

The DRC offers a variety of customized training, ranging from several hours up to two days. These trainings focus on conflict within the workplace and collaborative problem solving for community groups. Rates vary according to length, content, and number of participants. The structure includes the use of didactic and experiential training techniques, employing hands-on practice throughout the learning experience. Customized trainings can be conducted in person or as a live, interactive, online training.

Here is a sample of requested Customized Trainings that can also be customized for your needs upon request:

- The Angry Customer
- Conflict in the Workplace
- Conflict Prevention and Management
- Work Culture and Conflict Prevention
- Conflict Resolution for the HR Professional
- Strategic Planning
- Communication Tools For Resolving Conflict

Facilitation Skills Training for Teams

The DRC now offers Facilitation Skills Training for groups of 10 to 20 people. This training is designed to provide participants with the skills to enable productive conversations within groups that are experiencing a diversity of opinions, experiences, and philosophies. The training can be conducted in person or as a live, interactive, online training, in half-day or full-day sessions.



TRAININGS (Continued)

Volunteer Training

The DRC encourages and supports continuing education training for our Volunteer Mediators. Two of the most popular training opportunities occur at the **Texas Association of Mediators (TAM)** Annual Professional Development Conference and the **Texas Mediator Credentialing Association (TMCA)** Annual Symposium.



The **National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM)**, of which our Center is a member, offers a variety of trainings through member organizations across the country.



At the local level, our Mediators have continued to benefit from attendance at bi-monthly speaker presentations through the **Austin Mediators Association (AMA)**. This past year some of these trainings were presented via Zoom and some in person at our Center.

Topics presented through AMA this past year were:

Impasse is a Falacy, by **Lee Jay Berman**, founder and President of the American Institute of Mediation

Conflict Resolution in Congregations: Year-End & In-Person Meeting & Lunch at the Austin DRC. Panelists: **Jasmeen Peermohammad**, Mediator with Ismaili Council for Southwestern USA on the Conciliation and Arbitration Board; **Rabbi Dan Ain**, Parent Life Educator at Shalom Austin; **Dr. Steven Tomlinson**, Professor at The Seminary of the Southwest

Mediation Law Update, by **Gene Roberts, Jr.**, Associate Dean of Students at Sam Houston State University

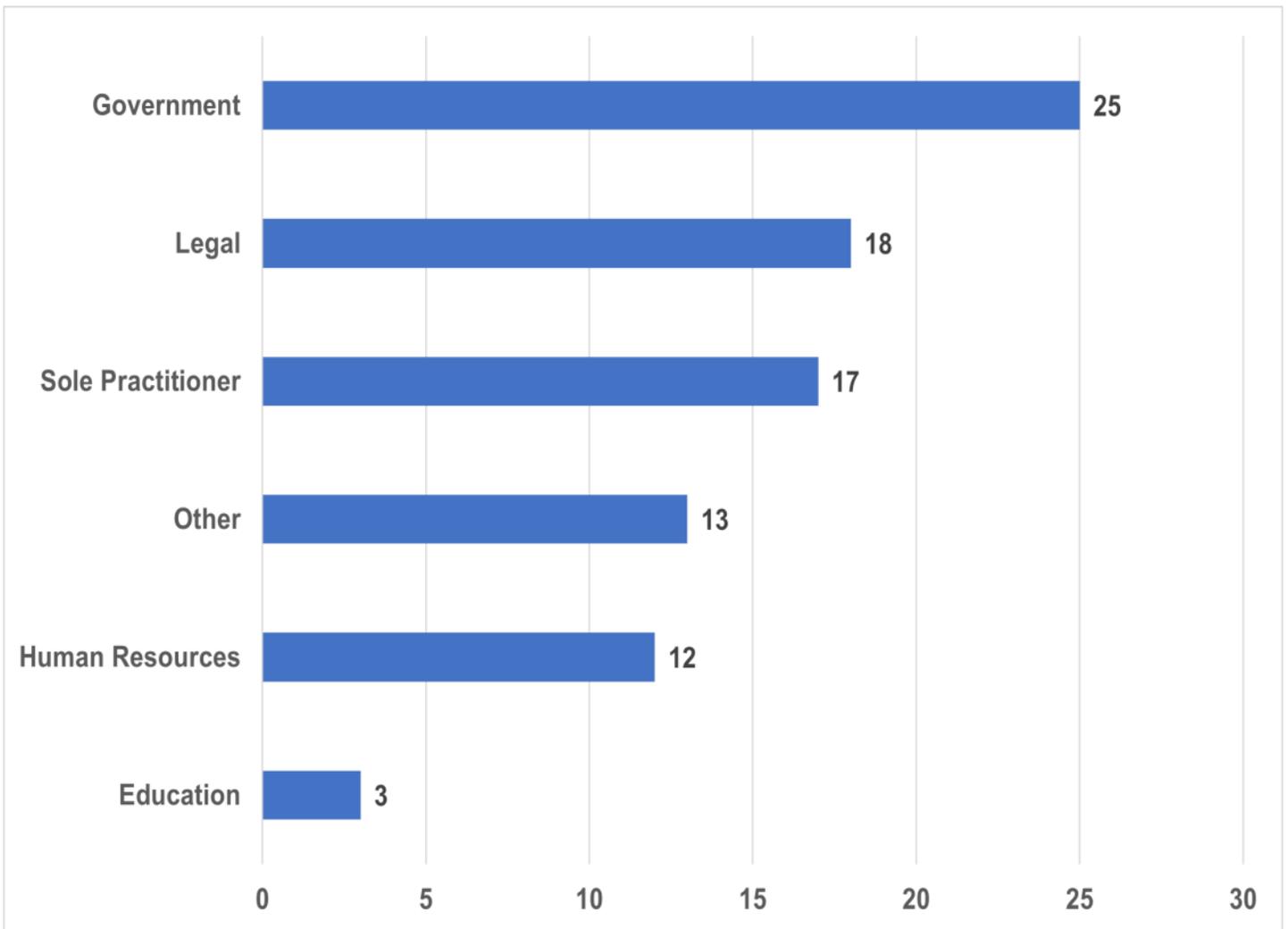
United Nations Mediation Support Unit, by **Kirsi Joenpolvi**, a member of the Standby Team of the United Nations Mediation Support Unit (MSU)

Mediators & Attorneys: Allies in Dispute Resolution, by Attorneys **Madison Preston** and **Allison Kalis**

Ethical Challenges When Mediating Pro Se Family Law Disputes—A 2-Part Series, by **John Palmer**, experienced trial attorney and TMCA Credentialed Distinguished Mediator



**OCCUPATIONS OF PEOPLE
TRAINED AS MEDIATORS
2024-2025**



In Memoriam Walter Wright



With deep gratitude and fond remembrance, we honor the late **Walter Wright** for his significant and lasting contributions to the Dispute Resolution Center.

Walter was a dedicated and long-time trainer in our 40-hour Basic Mediation Trainings and served as a volunteer mediator for many years before that. His commitment to the principles of mediation and conflict resolution helped shape the foundation of our work and touched the lives of many.

He was a professor in the Legal Studies Program within the Department of Political Science at Texas State University, where he taught courses in law and alternative dispute resolution (ADR). He also served as an adjunct professor of mediation at the University of Texas School of Law.

Walter earned his B.A. and J.D. from the University of Houston and an LL.M. in International Legal Studies from New York University. He was a former president of both the Texas Association of Mediators and the Association of Attorney-Mediators. A Credentialed Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association, he was honored as an Outstanding Credentialed Mediator in 2023.

Walter passed away in December 2024. He will be remembered not only for his professional excellence but also for his generosity, wisdom, and unwavering dedication to peaceful conflict resolution.

He will be deeply missed.

VOLUNTEER REVIEW 2024 - 2025

Our December 2024 Holiday Party was once again held at Chez Zee Grill, a favorite spot for our volunteer holiday gatherings.



VOLUNTEER REVIEW 2024 - 2025

Our annual Volunteer Appreciation Party was held in May 2025 at a new venue, Culinary Dropout at the Domain. We enjoyed a delicious meal and lively conversation in a delightful open-air environment.

As always, our deepest appreciation and gratitude go to our amazing volunteer Mediators and Board.



Our May 2025 Volunteer Appreciation Party - continued



As a thank-you, each volunteer chose from a selection of hardbound Milk Street cookbooks.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the Twelve Months Ending September 30, 2025

	Sep 30, 25
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · Cash - Operating	251,070.85
1100 · Cash - Money Market	176,473.80
1125 · Cash - CD	178,869.06
1135 · Business Savings - APlus	61,718.30
1150 · Petty Cash	125.00
Total Checking/Savings	668,257.01
Other Current Assets	
1200 · Travis Cty. ADR Receivable	44,898.68
1400 · Prepaid Expenses	8,797.08
Total Other Current Assets	53,695.76
Total Current Assets	721,952.77
Fixed Assets	
1600 · Office Equipment	71,398.08
1625 · Website	8,000.00
1650 · Office Furniture	34,879.22
1700 · Accumulated Depreciation	-96,236.33
Total Fixed Assets	18,040.97
Other Assets	
1800 · Deposit - Office Space	4,501.75
Total Other Assets	4,501.75
TOTAL ASSETS	744,495.49
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2030 · Accounts Payable - Retirement	937.10
Total Accounts Payable	937.10
Other Current Liabilities	
2150 · Accrued Vacation	-408.52
2152 · Accrued payroll	-51,386.26
2247 · Unearned Trng Rev (6-25) 40-Hr	-2,850.00
2248 · Unearned Trng Rev (10/25) 40-Hr	10,450.00
2335 · Unearned Trng Rev (7-25) Fam	-650.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	-44,844.78
Total Current Liabilities	-43,907.68
Total Liabilities	-43,907.68
Equity	
32000 · Net Assets - Unrestricted	395,867.67
32100 · Net Assets - Board Designated	300,000.00
Net Income	92,535.50
Total Equity	788,403.17
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	744,495.49

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the Twelve Months Ending September 30, 2025

	<u>Oct '24 - Sep 25</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income			
DVD Sales	198.00		
4100 · Travis County ADR Fund	550,225.92	550,226.00	100.0%
4300 · Client Fees	51,380.00	45,000.00	114.18%
4600 · Interest Income	6,577.86	5,000.00	131.56%
4601 · dividend	571.70		
4650 · Room Rental	5,174.00	2,000.00	258.7%
4660 · Other Income	297.00	100.00	297.0%
4700 · 40 Hr. Mediation Trng.	74,100.00	74,100.00	100.0%
4750 · Other Training	7,100.00	9,750.00	72.82%
Total Income	695,624.48	686,176.00	101.38%
Expense			
5130 · Mediation Trng - Miscellaneous	611.04	800.00	76.38%
5140 · Mediation Trng - Trainer fees	47,900.00	38,700.00	123.77%
5160 · Other Trng - Facility and food	0.00	350.00	0.0%
5170 · Other Trng - Miscellaneous	0.00	200.00	0.0%
5180 · Other Trng - Trainer fee	0.00	6,000.00	0.0%
5310 · Accounting	10,060.00	10,000.00	100.6%
5315 · Outreach	617.50	5,000.00	12.35%
5319 · Credit card fees	5,813.48	5,500.00	105.7%
5320 · Bank charges	2.50	0.00	100.0%
5330 · Equipment/Facility Purchases	60.00	3,000.00	2.0%
5341 · Contract personnel	21,759.13	15,000.00	145.06%
5370 · Dues and subscriptions	340.00	500.00	68.0%
5400 · Employee - Development	2,849.96	1,000.00	285.0%
5410 · Employee - Fringe Benefits	79,480.30	85,000.00	93.51%
5420 · Employee - Relations	3,336.34	5,000.00	66.73%
5430 · Employee - Salaries	255,146.83	329,000.00	77.55%
5432 · Trinet	19,283.83	17,000.00	113.43%
5440 · Employee - Taxes	25,030.54	25,100.00	99.72%
5500 · Equipment rental	2,206.27	3,000.00	73.54%
5510 · Insurance - Commercial	1,816.00	1,800.00	100.89%
5515 · Cyber Insurance	2,218.20		
5520 · Insurance - Directors/Officers	1,190.00	1,200.00	99.17%
5530 · Insurance - Worker's Comp	804.23	950.00	84.66%
5550 · Office rent	85,515.21	92,500.00	92.45%
5560 · Office supplies	3,538.77	3,500.00	101.11%
5570 · Postage	125.77	500.00	25.15%
5580 · Printing and production	0.00	500.00	0.0%
5590 · Public relations	212.88	1,000.00	21.29%
5600 · Repairs and maintenance	7,140.00	10,000.00	71.4%
5601 · Technology	8,128.05	6,203.00	131.03%
5610 · Telephone	7,089.67	6,500.00	109.07%
5620 · Travel and mileage	137.57	400.00	34.39%
5630 · Volunteer relations	6,063.14	10,273.00	59.02%
5660 · Board Activities	427.05	700.00	61.01%
7500 · Depreciation Expense	4,184.72	6,277.08	66.67%
Total Expense	603,088.98	692,453.08	87.1%
Net Ordinary Income	92,535.50	-6,277.08	-1,474.18%
Net Income	92,535.50	-6,277.08	-1,474.18%

EXPENDITURES 2024-2025

