Dispute Resolution Center Board of Directors Meeting

Sept 28, 2026

I. Welcome Sameer Shah

- In Attendance: Erin Robinson, Sameer Shah, Judge Thomas, Scott Howard, Judge Herrera, Anna Rau, Amie Rodnick, Jena Stude, Dr. Schooler, Renita Saunders, Judge Clark-Meachum, Bettye Benten, Dr. De La Teja, Nadia Bettac

President Shah's last meeting. Thanked the board and gave a quick preview of the meeting agenda.

II. Minutes Sameer Shah

- Motion to approve the July 2026 meeting minutes from President Shah. Second by Amie Rodnick. Motion passed without objection, one abstention.

III. Board of Directors Update Sameer Shah

- Introduce 2026-2027 Leadership – President Shah provided a quick review of the accomplishments and challenges of the previous year. Thanks and kind words from Dr. De La Teja followed. Then President Shah made a motion to approve Dr. Schooler as the next board president and Jena Stude as the next board president-elect. The motion was seconded by Judge Herrera and passed unanimously. Judge Thomas will stay as Secretary.
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- Update on Treasurer - The Treasurer position is still open. Judge Herrera reviewed the various places she has posted the position to the public. The goal is to find someone with an accounting/finance background. A question was asked about the time commitment and duties. These during will include reviewing the quarterly statements

with the board, reviewing and ensuring the tax filings are done in a timely manner, and reporting to the board. The previous treasurer was a CPA and did a lot of extra work, but the role should really be about oversight and review of what is prepared by an accountant and liaise with the board. Dr. Schooler then provided the name of another website (https://www.ilivehereigivehere.org/) to look for a treasurer. He also reminded us that we need to have a succession plan in place for the future for these board officer position.

- Introduce Pedro Villalobos - Pedro did not appear. He was introduced briefly by Judge Herrera as the County Commissioner Precinct 4 nominee. Short discussion as to whether we needed to vote on his membership as he is the County Commissioner appointee but to be safe, we voted. Judge Thomas moved to approve him as a board member. Judge Clark Meachum seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Heather Moreau has resigned from the board due to time constraints. It was noted that we should not just be looking for Treasurer candidates, but also board members in general.

IV. Executive Director Update Erin Robinson

- Please see Appendix 1 for the prepared ED Report. The notes below are meant to supplement Appendix 1.

• Case Growth – Overall, about a 30% increase in the last quarter, and it is believed that a lot of this growth is driven by referrals from Chat GPT as people search for low-cost alternatives to dispute resolution.

• ADR Notable – An explanation of some of the tings that ADR Notable will provide was given. This includes sending polling options for parties to decide on meeting times instead of simply trading emails back and forth. It can send bills, reminders, notices, and also autofill certain forms. It can also supply blank forms for people conducting remote mediations. The staff is getting basic training on ADR Notable for

now and once it has been in place for a while, the staff will get more advanced training, likely in January.

- Training Growth – see Appendix 1

- Financial Planning – Erin hopes to have a Financial Review ready for the January meeting. Financial Planner Amy Cobb will help prepare a formal review. Ms. Cobb will review prior budgets for accuracy but also to learn what our usual spending and needs are. This will help her advise how to manage budgets and growth going forward. ED Robinson also noted that it may be time to consider a fee increase due to this increased demand. And we may need to add another staff member.

- Partnerships, Marketing & Outreach – see Appendix 1. ED Robinson also has met with Office of Police Oversight about possible use of our services for their needs. Discussion was held and most comments were in favor of this form of growth.

V. Finance — Erin Robinson

- Financial Update – Discussion on this topic mostly focused on the Treasurer search. See Appendix 1 for more details regarding growth and usage.

VI. President's Farewell — Sameer Shah

- President Shah gave thanks for the work of the board and the opportunity to serve.

VII. Adjourn — Dr. Larry Schooler

- Dr. Schooler adjourned the meeting at 1:07 PM

Appendix 1

Executive Director's Report

Board Meeting – September 28, 2026

Executive Director's Report

Dispute Resolution Center of Austin
September 2026

Overview

The last several months have been busy, with much of our attention focused on keeping up with increased demand while continuing to improve our internal systems. We are preparing to launch ADR Notable, our trainings continue to sell out, and case volume has increased significantly compared with last year. We are also evaluating our financial systems and organizational capacity to make sure that the DRC can support this level of activity.

Case Management & Growth

Demand for DRC services has continued to grow significantly this quarter. In the third quarter, cases opened increased from 196 in FY2025 to 253 in FY2026, a 29% increase. That growth has accelerated since then. July case volume was 65% higher than July 2025, and August was 82% higher than August 2025. This is exciting and reflects the increased visibility we have been working toward, but it is also putting pressure on the Case Management team. Staff are handling the workload well, and Rita's move into her new role has provided some relief. This level of growth reinforces the need to review how responsibilities are divided and where we need additional support.

Operations – ADR Notable

The transition from DTAS to ADR Notable continues to be one of our largest operational projects. Staff began training this summer, and we have been working closely with the ADR Notable team to customize the system for DRC's needs. Rather than rushing the implementation, we have taken a slower approach to

training and preparation. ADR Notable is scheduled to launch October 1, the first day of the new fiscal year.

Travis County awarded DRC an additional $10,000 one-time allocation specifically to help cover the cost of the software transition. Once launched, ADR Notable should give us better tools for managing cases, communicating with mediators, tracking activity, and collecting reliable data. We will lose access to DTAS on December 31, 2026.

Training

Training demand has also continued to grow. Our July 30-Hour Family Mediation Training had 16 participants, compared with 11 the previous year.

Demand for the October 40-Hour Basic Mediation Training has been even stronger. We currently have 36 participants registered, despite our normal cap of 32. This is this the second consecutive training where we have expanded capacity to meet demand.

Financial Planning

As DRC grows, I want to make sure our financial systems and planning are strong. Guillermo and I have been working on clearer long-term projections, including looking ahead to FY2028. After researching several options for objective financial evaluation and support, I interviewed Amy Cobb, who specializes in nonprofit financial management. I have hired her to focused on strengthening our budgeting, financial processes, and internal financial knowledge. The proposed cost is $7,500, which can be paid from reserves. DRC currently has approximately $423,413 in reserves/savings.

The goal is not simply to revise a budget. I want us to have a clearer understanding of our long-term financial position, better forecasting tools, and stronger internal financial knowledge so that future decisions about staffing, fees, programs, and other investments are based on reliable information. Amy will also be training to Guillermo to strengthen his financial knowledge.

Partnerships, Marketing & Outreach

Our partnership with the Travis County Law Library continues to grow. This summer, the two staffs held a joint training to learn more about each other's

work and identify ways to improve coordination. We are also working together on a checklist of issues that should be addressed in family law mediations to help ensure our agreements meet the expectations of the courts.

I will speak at the Austin Police Oversight Expo on September 26 and have participated in two preparation sessions with APO's marketing staff.

On the marketing side, I decided not to renew our social media contractor agreement when it expires. Kristin has done good work, but at $2,400 per month, I did not feel the results justified the expense. Ronny will take over social media beginning October 1. We have also updated and placed our annual advertisement in Austin Lawyer.

Looking Ahead

Our immediate focus is getting through the October 1 launch of ADR Notable and managing the continued increase in cases without sacrificing the quality of our services.

We have spent much of the past few years improving systems, rebuilding relationships, updating the way we operate, and increasing awareness of DRC. We are now seeing some of the results of that work. The next challenge is making sure our internal capacity and financial planning keep pace with the growth we are experiencing.

Quarterly Case Activity

THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON

Fiscal Year	PREVIOUS PENDING	CASES OPENED	CASES MEDIATED	% MEDIATED	CASES SETTLED	AVE % SETTLED	PND		I&R
2026		**253**	**92**	**13.0%**	**55**	**59.3%**			**41**
2025		**196**	**66**	**13.2%**	**42**	**62.5%**			**49**