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