



THE STATE OF COMMUNITY MEDIATION

REPORT ON 2004 DATA

BY AMBER HARDIN
FINAL EDITING AND FORMAT BY ERIKA ACERRA
NAFCM PRESS

1527 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036



**NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
FOR
COMMUNITY
MEDIATION**

presents:

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“Some amount of conflict is inevitable in every society. The key question is how that conflict gets resolved. America’s community mediation programs provide an important piece of the answer in this country. Through community mediation programs, we can help each other build and strengthen our communities and neighborhoods by working to help individuals and communities solve their own problems and resolve their own disputes.” ~ Janet Reno¹, Former Attorney General

INTRODUCTION

Community mediation grew out of concerns for finding better ways of resolving conflicts and efforts for improving and complementing the legal system. Citizens, neighbors, religious leaders and communities became empowered, realizing that they could resolve many complaints and disputes on their own in their own community through mediation. Experimental community mediation programs using volunteer mediators began in the early 1970's in several major cities. The success of these programs initiated the development of hundreds of other programs throughout the country in the following years. Community mediation programs now flourish throughout the United States.

Mediation is a process of dispute resolution in which one or more impartial third parties intervenes in a conflict or dispute with the consent of the participants and assists them in negotiating a consensual and informed agreement. In mediation, the decision-making authority rests with the participants themselves. Recognizing participant needs, cultural differences, and variations in style, the mediation process allows participants to define and clarify issues, reduce obstacles to communication, explore possible solutions, and, when desired, reach a mutually satisfactory agreement. Whether or not an agreement is reached, mediation presents the opportunity to express differences and improve relationships and mutual understanding.

Community mediation programs (CMPs) strive to empower citizens in communities by providing a wide range of conflict resolution services and education. This report offers a glimpse of the valuable work CMPs are doing and what centers look like.

Sources of data for this report came from the 2004 NAFCM membership database, NAFCM Strategic Survey, State Annual Reports, responses from NAFCM listserv inquiries, and NAFCM Minigrant reports.

¹ Quote extracted from *National Institute of Justice: Issues and Practices Community Mediation Programs: Developments and Challenges* by Daniel McGillis. July 1997.