



2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT

CCR MISSION STATEMENT

CCR works with individuals, communities, courts and other institutions to manage and resolve conflict.

CCR CORE VALUES

Core Value #1: Commitment to Serving the Community

- Apply consistency and clarity in message and practice
- Be responsive
- Exhibit flexibility and resiliency

Core Value #2: Collaborative Spirit

- Engage and involve one another
- Celebrate each others' successes
- Pitch in and find ways to contribute
- Give and receive constructive feedback

Core Value #3: Inclusivity

- Value individual differences
- Create space for new and different ideas
- Exhibit transparent communication and understanding

Core Value #4: Strive for Personal Best

- Continuously learn and improve
- Take responsibility
- Think outside the box

Core Value #5: Inspire Growth and Success

- Support and encourage each other
- Embrace and learn from challenges

WHAT ARE CORE VALUES?

Core values are a set of beliefs that enable an organization to function at its highest level, and are shown through behaviors that members are expected to exhibit and practice. Core values apply internally to staff and volunteers, and externally to client and stakeholder relationships.

Core Values guide an organization and its members when:

- Clarifying the organization's identity and supporting its strategic plan
- Leading meetings and projects
- Making decisions or resolving disputes
- Educating the public about the organization

DEAR CCR COMMUNITY,

Center for Conflict Resolution is celebrating 46 years of working with individuals, communities, courts and other institutions to manage and resolve conflict. During the 2024-2025 period, CCR built on that legacy, growing all of its program areas through innovation, dedication, and a desire to serve the community.

Since its inception in 2020, CCR has served more than 50,000 individuals through the **Early Resolution Program (ERP)**. Supported by Cook County, the Circuit Court of Cook County and the Chicago Bar Foundation, CCR provides both case management and mediation services for ERP, and, in partnership with all the legal aid organizations involved, continues to innovate its technology and processes to better serve those in housing crisis.

Our **Training** department has also seen exponential growth in the past 5 years. The team now has four full-time staff members, offers trainings and workshops nationwide, has expanded the diversity of clients, and in FY25 alone offered more than \$24,000 in scholarships to Mediation Skills Training and Conflict Management Workshop participants.

Mediation Services continues to respond and adapt to the needs of the community: in the last four years, youth program referrals have increased by 213%, small claims referrals increased by 220%, and Stalking/ No Contact referrals increased by 35%. In response to

this growing need, CCR grew its volunteer pool from 180 active volunteers to 215, and now offers more extensive interpretation services.

In order to manage this growing need and better serve our clients, CCR's **Volunteer** department spearheaded an Equity Audit of our volunteer process. Through extensive work carrying out the recommendations of this audit, we will be able to work toward better reflecting and representing the clients we serve. This work was in partnership with InQuest Consulting and Resolution Systems Institute, and generously funded by the AAA-ICDR Foundation and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation.

Because of this growth, CCR is able to serve more than 15,000 people annually - we could not do this work without YOU!

All of our community members - volunteer mediators and trainers, Volunteer Council members, Board and Auxiliary Board members, Past Presidents, funders, community partners and staff members – play a role in making these program areas thrive. In this report, please enjoy, and be inspired by, a snapshot of the amazing individuals, organizations and institutions that move our work forward. Our gratitude for your dedication is endless – here's to the next 46 years of growth and innovation!

Sincerely,



Whitney Trumble
Interim Executive Director



Kenneth Gunn
President, Board of Directors

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CCR STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

STRATEGIC GOAL 1
Strengthen community awareness of and engagement in conflict resolution services.

The Board of Directors' Marketing & Outreach Committee is finalizing a comprehensive Marketing Matrix that identifies CCR services, the audiences who may be most interested in those services, and honing messages to targeted organizations, communities, and people.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2
Leverage CCR's training brand to expand training clients and revenue.

The Training Department has expanded to add two new members, allowing the number of clients to increase by 28% from FY24 to FY25. Training participants were diversified to increase school-based trainings by 21%.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3
Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to better serve our clients and communities.

CCR is offering more trainings and workshops for staff, volunteers, Board and Auxiliary Board members on subjects including Trans-Affirming Best Practices, DEI Facilitation, and professional development. After an equity audit, the Mediator Mentorship Program has begun to shift practices to be inclusive of a wider pool of candidates. Volunteer retention efforts have helped alert individuals who have been absent, and offer avenues for continued involvement.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4
Position CCR internally for sustainability, resiliency, and growth.

CCR's hiring process ensures candidates are considered more equitably by focusing on skills and experience necessary for a position, and getting feedback and input from a broad range of staff. The organization has grown exponentially and re-designed its structure to best provide services, support efforts, and utilize staff.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5
Support organizational vitality with expanded funding.

The organization's relationship with courts and the legal aid community continues to be strong, with increased judicial awareness of CCR's many programs, greater visibility at the state government level, and targeted outreach to Chicago, Cook County, and Illinois supporters.

IN GRATITUDE

CCR is profoundly grateful to former Executive Director Cassie Lively for 20 years of dedication and leadership.

Throughout Cassie's tenure as a Case Manager, Director of Case Management and Executive Director, she lived and breathed the ideals of the organization and served as a true champion of mediation. Cassie always cared deeply for staff and volunteers, and was willing to stand up for partners and participants to ensure everyone was receiving support, being heard, and accessing the resources they needed. Under Cassie's guidance, CCR nearly tripled in staff size, the volunteer pool expanded to over 200 active volunteers, and tens of thousands of individuals were able to access mediation. Cassie led CCR with passion, tenacity and grace, and the CCR Community is forever grateful for her service.



Thank you, Cassie!



MEDIATION SERVICES

Collaborative Mediation Programs with Community Partners

Each year, the mediation services department handles more than 1,200 mediation referrals throughout Cook County. Approximately 80% of these disputes are referred through the Circuit Court of Cook County. Others are self-referred parties or come through different CCR referral programs with community agencies including the Better Business Bureau, Neighborspace, All Chicago, and Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago. Referrals from these community partners help individuals resolve disputes outside the court system when the parties themselves are best positioned to find solutions. This creates an opportunity for community members to resolve conflicts before filing a court case or paying expensive legal fees.

Maintaining and building partnerships with community organizations is at the core of CCR's mission. A strong

example is our partnership with the BBB. Established in 2018, the Better Business Bureau of Chicago and Northern Illinois refers consumer complaints to CCR for mediation. In most instances, parties have already attempted to resolve their dispute before coming to CCR. We provide them with the opportunity to discuss the matter with a neutral mediator. These cases resemble the small claims work CCR has handled for over 40 years and typically involve complaints about home repairs, automotive services, dry cleaning, and other business-related issues. This past year, our partnership expanded as we began accepting cases from their Sacramento, CA offices.

Another notable example is our mediation program with The Northwest Municipal Conference (NWMC), a coalition of communities in Chicago's northwest suburbs. This partnership was established in the 1990s to help when previous interventions by police and municipal officials have failed to resolve disputes.

We've successfully mediated conflicts between neighbors, business owners, and various community stakeholders. The effectiveness of this program recently caught the attention of the Village of Orland Park, which contacted us about our conflict resolution services. We've now implemented a 6-month pilot program with Orland Park to familiarize them with our services and referral process, with the goal of establishing a formal partnership once completed.

Self-Community Referred Mediation Program

CCR has been mediating these cases since 1979, providing valuable conflict resolution services for over four decades to the Chicago community. Parties hear about CCR through a variety of sources including referrals from satisfied participants, targeted community outreach programs, recommendations from legal professionals, social service agencies,

(Mediation Services cont'd)

and comprehensive online resources. Many individuals and organizations decide to try mediation before bringing their disputes to court, recognizing the numerous benefits of a more collaborative approach to conflict resolution, such as reduced costs, faster resolution times, and the preservation of important relationships. These cases may involve a wide range of disputes between family members with deep-rooted conflicts, friends experiencing communication breakdowns, co-workers facing workplace tensions, consumers seeking fair treatment, and merchants or businesses attempting to maintain positive community relations. The complexity varies significantly from simple misunderstandings that can be clarified through facilitated communication to complicated multi-party conflicts.

CCR mediates an average of 150 self-community referred cases a year, reflecting our established presence within the Chicago area as a trusted conflict resolution resource. We

continuously strive to expand our reach and impact, hoping that this number will steadily increase as more individuals and organizations become aware of and familiar with our facilitative mediation services. Through our ongoing community outreach efforts and positive word-of-mouth referrals, we aim to make mediation a first-choice option for those experiencing conflicts before they escalate to formal legal proceedings.

CCR's self-community referred mediation program gives people both a unique opportunity to work with a neutral facilitator and the power to determine solutions that work best for their specific situation.

Post Decree/Parenting Agreement Mediation Program

Since 1998, CCR has provided comprehensive mediation services to co-parents through a mediation clause incorporated into existing divorce

decrees or joint parenting agreements from Cook County Domestic Relations Court.

CCR facilitates mediation for co-parents seeking to modify existing agreements prior to court appearances. When the terms of the original parenting agreement are no longer followed due to changing circumstances or ongoing conflicts, co-parents can resolve these issues through facilitated mediation instead of costly and emotionally draining litigation. CCR helps resolve various parenting issues including parenting time schedules, participation in extracurricular activities, effective communication plans, and child support concerns as families navigate the challenges of co-parenting after separation. This essential program provides free, high-quality mediation services to co-parents with limited financial resources

Co-parenting cases make up a significant portion of CCR's work, approximately 200 cases each year where families receive crucial support.

(Mediation Services cont'd)

To maintain this valuable program, we annually invite experienced mediators to participate in our Child Focused Training program. This specialized training prepares mediators to work with families experiencing various levels of conflict, ensuring clients receive quality service tailored to the unique needs of families in transition.

CCR's Post Decree/Parenting Agreement Mediation Program creates a supportive environment where parents can work through their differences collaboratively. The program aims to help families establish sustainable agreements that prioritize the well-being of their children.

Finding a Way to Co-parent (CCR Parenting Case Story)

Sean and Katherine had always shared a deep mutual respect and unwavering dedication to their 11-year-old daughter, Alexa, despite their differences. They were

referred to mediation by the court to address custody concerns. Both saw it as an opportunity to prioritize Alexa's wellbeing in a cooperative way, and hoped the process would help them build a solid foundation for Alexa's future.

The mediator facilitated a conversation that made space for vulnerability and honesty. Katherine was able to articulate that her protectiveness stemmed not from wanting to limit Sean's involvement, but from wanting to protect Alexa from the pain of inconsistency. Sean revealed that he hadn't had a present father growing up and was determined to be different for Alexa. The mediator asked about their communication patterns, and the parents realized that, with more direct communication, they could avoid misunderstandings and ensure Alexa's needs were consistently met.

With a clearer understanding of each other's intentions, Sean and

Katherine agreed to a temporary plan where Sean would see Alexa weekly and participate in her therapy. Katherine offered to send him updates on Alexa's week, strengthening his role in her life. They agreed to reconvene in a few months for another mediation, recognizing that they were creating a path for Sean to rebuild his relationship with Alexa, one based on trust and consistency.

During the follow-up mediation session, Sean and Katherine proudly shared their progress. They had drafted a comprehensive agreement covering key aspects of their coparenting arrangement. Sean and Katherine expressed heartfelt gratitude for the chance to work together for Alexa's benefit. They saw how the process had helped them reconnect with the best parts of their relationship—their shared love for Alexa, their dedication, and their respect for each other as coparents.

COMMON MEDIATION CASE TYPES AT CCR

Better Business Bureau:

- usually consumer/merchant disputes

Chancery:

- disputes over larger amounts of money

Civil Trial:

- contract disputes, tenant-landlord issues

Cook County Commission on Human Rights:

- discrimination cases referred by CCCHR

Early Resolution Program:

- landlord-tenant and debt collection disputes

Eviction:

- landlord files to evict current tenants

Fee:

- often disputes over unpaid legal fees

Residential:

- involves a residence, often neighbor or roommate

Self/Community Referred:

- anyone can bring a case to CCR!

Small Claims:

- business or familial contracts or loans disputes

Stalking/No Contact:

- stalking/no contact order filed by party/parties

YOUTH-SPECIFIC CASES

Juvenile:

- multiple affected parties participate

Juvenile Family:

- youth and member(s) of their family

Juvenile Reentry:

- detained youth work through next steps

FAMILY-SPECIFIC CASES

Initial Parenting Agreement:

- 1st parenting plan draft, never married parents

Parenting Agreement:

- parenting plan, never married parents

Post-Decree:

- modifying agreement post-divorce

Financial Mediation:

- disputes regarding assets or debts

Guardian Ad Litem:

- guardianship of a child or adult

EARLY RESOLUTION PROGRAM

CCR's role in Cook County's Early Resolution Program (ERP) continues its positive impact.

Launched in early 2021 in response to major increases in eviction and consumer debt case filings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Early Resolution Program has grown into a model program that influences comparable programs across the country.

The program is led by and was developed in partnership with Cook County government, the Circuit Court of Cook County, the Chicago Bar Foundation, and several Chicago-area legal aid organizations. CCR has the central role of facilitating the program, which includes providing dedicated and highly trained CCR staff as case managers and certified mediators, working within all six of Cook County's municipal court districts. The program is virtual, allowing CCR's ERP staff to serve

litigants in multiple courtrooms across the county simultaneously. In some courtrooms, a hybrid model is used allowing both in-person and virtual court appearances. Virtual access to both the courtroom and ERP services has been very helpful for participants who would otherwise be unable to access these resources or participate in the court process. Jim Alritz, CCR's ERP Programs Director, says, "I'm fortunate to be leading a specialized and dedicated team who play a number of roles throughout the process, all with the goal of helping to resolve the conflict or at least to better prepare the litigants to manage their own case going forward."

In court, the judge will refer a litigant to the ERP and the case managers direct self-represented litigants with eviction or consumer debt cases to valuable legal aid resources and mediation if appropriate. Agreements reached in mediation are written

up by the mediator and submitted to court by the ERP case manager thereby avoiding costly courtroom trials. Jim explains, "The successful partnerships between CCR and Cook County court system judges, court clerks, legal aid organizations, and rental assistance programs provides litigants full access to resources and an efficient, streamlined process."

Since 2021, there have been over 50,000 eviction and consumer debt cases referred to the program, meaning many people in our community have been helped during a very challenging and stressful time in their lives. In the last year alone, there have been 830 ERP cases referred to mediation, with 84% of parties reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied with mediation and 99% of parties reporting that their mediator treated them with respect. The entire ERP team is proud to continue to make

(Early Resolution Program cont'd)

a significant and positive impact throughout Cook County.

CCR ERP Eviction Mediation Story

Manuel and Kevin are brothers and business partners. About 5 years ago, they decided to open their own management company in Chicago. They own 3 small houses and are very proud of the work they have accomplished during the past years.

Laura and Joe have been renting from Manuel and Kevin for the past two years. They moved to Chicago from Honduras about 15 years ago looking for better opportunities and a better future. Joe was a teacher in Honduras and was a mechanic in Chicago. Laura had a small business selling clothes. Recently they faced a lot of difficult circumstances in their lives.

As the mediator asked the participants about their landlord/tenant relationship, both sides

described it as good and amicable until 8 months ago when Laura and Joe stopped paying rent. Laura got a little emotional and interrupted the mediator to apologize to Manuel and Kevin for not paying rent for so long. She expressed she felt embarrassed and recognized that Manuel and Kevin had every right to take them to court. The mediator asked Manuel or Kevin if they had something to say, to which Manuel responded that they didn't have anything against them, that it was all about keeping their business afloat, and for that reason they needed the money and house back.

Parties had their next court date the following week, so the mediator asked the landlords about what they were looking to get from the tenants. Kevin answered by saying that they owed \$12,000 in back rent plus \$2,000 of the water bill. Laura then shared some deeply personal hardships they had been

experiencing including illness and death. The mediator asked Manuel and Kevin if they were aware of this. They shook their heads no, then Kevin shared that they cut all communications with Laura and Joe about 6 months ago when they started the eviction process. It also came to light that there was a major miscommunication regarding applying for rental assistance. After hearing each other and how different their perspectives were, the siblings offered a new option to Laura and Joe.

Manuel and Kevin said, "Ok, let's make this work." Manuel and Kevin agreed to take \$1,500 and to give them 45 days to move out. For them, having their house back was the priority, so they were trusting Laura and Joe to follow their word. The mediator wrote the agreement and before the mediation ended, both sides thanked each other with well wishes.



MEDIATION PARTICIPANTS SAY:

"We got through a problem I never thought we would agree on outside of court."

"I felt heard and understood the other perspective completely. I felt good about the outcome and conversation that was had."

"I felt safe. Having a mediator makes confronting the other party less of a challenge."

"I felt like I was in good hands with a seasoned mediator and they helped us with concrete tools and processes and helped make sure we were hearing each other."

"It also gave me the opportunity to show another side of me (that I actually care and want to help prevent this from happening again). I appreciate the opportunity given."



TRAINING PARTICIPANTS SAY:

"Hands down the best training I have ever attended, and it's not even close! The instructors were not only knowledgeable and experienced but also genuinely wanted to help all students learn and grow as mediators themselves. The knowledge and experience that I have gained through participating in this course will be put to use daily and will have far reaching impacts. Thank you for all that you do CCR!"

"I'm not exaggerating when I say this training changed my life. These are skills that I will take with me in my professional and private spaces. Every coach and every teacher was absolutely phenomenal. They were all experts in their craft, but what's more they elevated me beyond what I thought was possible for myself. I didn't expect to make such a personal connection with my fellow trainees or with my team of educators."

GARDENEERS + CCR: GROWING MORE THAN JUST GARDENS

Since 2014, Gardeneers has been transforming schoolyards into thriving gardens across Chicago's south and west sides. Their mission goes far beyond planting vegetables—they're tackling food injustice head-on by teaching students how to grow their own food, connecting them to the history of agriculture and nutrition, and making fresh produce available in neighborhoods where it's often hard to find. Every harvest isn't just food—it's empowerment, education, and community resilience.

But cultivating healthy communities doesn't stop at the soil. With a team of 33 AmeriCorps members—each bringing their own energy, ideas, and personalities—conflict inevitably sprouted. Gardeneers knew that to keep their mission strong, they needed tools for resolving differences.

That's where CCR came in. After researching their options,

Gardeneers chose CCR as their partner, confident in CCR's reputation for practical, people-centered training. Together, they set out to build skills that would help staff and volunteers handle disagreements with patience, empathy, and confidence.

Since 2023, CCR has designed customized workshops for Gardeneers, first with a staff training and later expanding to their AmeriCorps teams. Real-life examples from the garden became the foundation for practice, with CCR trainers helping participants turn tense moments into opportunities for understanding. One of the most powerful lessons? That even when perspectives differ, it's possible to find common ground—sometimes in places you least expect it.

Leah Goldbloom, Director of AmeriCorps at Gardeneers, described the CCR Training Team as "organized and easy to work with,

personable, not too serious, friendly, and intuitive." Staff and volunteers left workshops with something valuable in hand: a stronger sense of how to approach conflict with clarity and calm. Leah walked away with a deeper understanding of the hierarchy of needs, and with CCR's guidance, the Gardeneers team began to see conflict less as a roadblock and more as an opportunity to grow together.

Today, Gardeneers and CCR continue to cultivate not just gardens, but relationships rooted in respect, collaboration, and shared purpose. Through their partnership, youth, staff, and volunteers alike are learning to value each other's perspectives, embrace creative problem-solving, and strengthen the bonds that nourish both people and communities.



TRAINING SNAPSHOT: FY 2024 AND FY 2025

Increasing Team Capacity

CCR now supports four full-time staff members dedicated to providing training services. Ten volunteers lead lectures and co-facilitate workshops. Training participants frequently describe the team as having “great energy and enjoy working together,” appreciate the “use of humor” and “clear explanations” of concepts.

In the past two years, CCR has onboarded sixteen new simulation coaches to support the most essential component of our 40-hour Mediation Skills Trainings. One recent MST participant noted: “The simulations were great - all of the trainers definitely have found their calling doing this work” and another shared “the trainers and coaches were truly invested, helpful and enthusiastic.”

Expanding Reach & Diversifying Offerings

The CCR training team returned to California, leading a workshop with the University of Santa Clara School of Law and later with the Northern California Innocence Project. CCR also trained members of the National Geographic Society team, building a two-part training that involved first a day online followed by an in-person workshop in Washington D.C. The team designed and delivered customized workshops for many non-profit organizations, government agencies, higher-education institutions, and more.

Earlier Skill Building

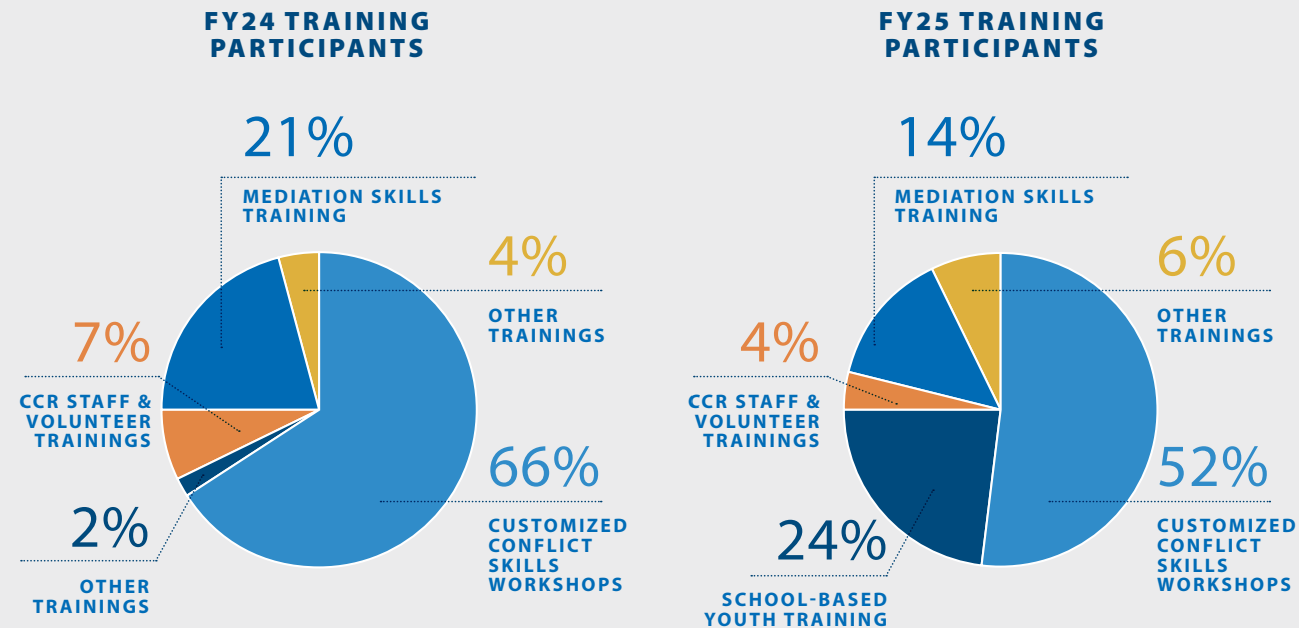
The CCR training team worked in three school districts and one private school to provide dynamic conflict resolution workshops to middle-school students as well as parents/guardians. After one of the parent workshops, a staff partner commented “I have

never seen our parents so actively participating in a workshop.”

After participating in a series of three skill-building workshops, a school-based staff partner shared that students “were able to apply what they learned when they came across a conflict,” and shared an anecdote of a student explicitly stating how and why she was approaching a disagreement in a particular way—educating her peers in the process.

When asked what they were taking away from the training session students shared that “conflict isn’t a horrible thing” and that it “doesn’t have to be an argument.” Another noted that “All [conflict resolution] styles are important. No one in specific will solve every problem.” Perhaps most powerfully, one student took from these workshops **“How to be a winner without making others lose.”**

(Training Snapshot: FY 2024 and FY 2025 cont’d)



ALVIN DODEK



Alvin Dodek is a partner at WH Trading LLC, where he has been involved in all aspects of the company over the past 30 years, including, trading, education, and management.

Alvin began his career as an intellectual property attorney and it was his time doing pro bono and clinical work that got him interested in Alternative Dispute Resolution. Seeing the difficulties around clients not having their voices heard, and getting lost in difficult systems eventually led Alvin to CCR's Mediation Skills Training and ultimately to its Mediator Mentorship Program. What attracted Alvin to CCR was the training which provides the necessary tools to assist in giving people a voice in resolving their own disputes and focusing on what is important to each individual in finding those resolutions. As a volunteer since 2024, Alvin has mediated 20 cases for CCR and provided consistent coverage within the court adapted model mediations encompassing small claims, eviction, and consumer debt issues. Alvin is a great example of the solid, reliable volunteers who regularly show up to make our work and mission possible.

JESSICA SULLIVAN-WILSON



Jessica Sullivan-Wilson is a passionate narrative builder, facilitator, storyteller, and cultivator of community.

With more than a decade of experience, Jessica uses her unique combination of classroom experience and legal expertise to cultivate spaces where community, educators, and students come together to manifest the school communities they deserve.

In 2013, Jessica served as a Public Interest Law Initiative Intern for CCR. It was during that time that she served as a case manager and became a trained mediator. Fast forward to 2025 and Jessica is still serving CCR in her role as an Auxiliary Board Member. She is a proud 2018 Chicago United for Equity Fellow and 2020/2021 Senior Fellow and a 2021 Surge Institute Alumna.

Born and raised in Gary, Indiana, Jessica earned her B.A. in English and Theatre Arts. Secondary Education from Elmhurst University, and her Juris Doctorate and Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies-English from Valparaiso University. She serves as the Managing Director, Partnerships at Teach for America Greater Chicago-Northwest Indiana. Jessica lives in the Woodlawn neighborhood in Chicago with her husband Robert and their dog Huey and enjoys crafting, spoken word and of course—live theater.

ESSEX MITCHELL



Essex Mitchell has been a volunteer mediator at CCR since June 2024 providing excellent and consistent mediation across a wide variety of case types including Small Claims, Evictions, Stalking No-Contact, and Consumer Debt issues.

He received his Certificate in Mediation Skills Training from Northwestern University in August 2023 and was later accepted into the Mediator Mentorship Program (MMP) at CCR in January 2024.

Essex is on the Board of Directors at the Clara Abbott Foundation. Before retiring in June 2022, he was Divisional Vice President, Employee Relations at Abbott Laboratories. His prior Abbott leadership roles included Divisional Vice President, Business Human Resources - Abbott Nutrition and Divisional Vice President, Organization Effectiveness. He also served on the Supervisory Board of Abbott's German subsidiary, Abbott GmbH.

A Philadelphia native, Essex holds a bachelor's degree in labor studies from the Pennsylvania State University.

Due to his extensive background in Human Resources he was very familiar with various forms of conflict resolution and wanted to find a way to utilize that knowledge in retirement. Volunteering at CCR was a perfect opportunity to allow him to help get parties to truly hear one another because it enhances the prospects of mutual and voluntary self-directed resolutions. He also believes an advantage of mediation is that it gives each party an opportunity to gain incremental information and understanding of the other person's concerns and interest.

KATIE KOLON



Katie Kolon is the founder of Mutual Ground Strategies, where she helps individuals and organizations navigate conflict, strengthen communication, and build healthier ways of working together.

She provides mediation, coaching, facilitation, and training that empower people to find their own solutions and create environments where both employees and businesses thrive.

Katie's path to mediation began while in law school and pursuing an MA in International Relations, when she completed her first mediation training. After working as an employment lawyer litigating cases around unpaid wages, discrimination, and harassment, she realized that financial remedies alone could not address people's deeper needs for understanding, accountability, and healing.

That recognition led her to the Center for Conflict Resolution, where she became a certified mediator in 2012 and has since served as both mediator and coach, mediating more than one hundred cases across a wide variety of case types including Eviction, Small Claims, Stalking No-Contact, Fee Disputes, Juvenile Criminal Misdemeanor matters, Parenting and Guardianship cases and more.

Her career has also spanned teaching, research, and leadership roles in cybersecurity and customer success, experiences that bring breadth and perspective to her mediation practice. In 2024, she launched Mutual Ground Strategies to expand access to conflict resolution in workplaces and beyond. Outside of her professional life, Katie enjoys competitive sailing, sewing, and cooking.

KATIE DIGGINS



Katie Diggins joined CCR as a volunteer mediator in 2020 with a background in law and education policy.

She is now a dispute resolution specialist who works as a mediator and administrative law judge as well as teaching mediation at her former law school, DePaul University. She is active with CCR as a member of the Board of Directors, trainer and volunteer mediator. Katie has mediated nearly 40 cases for CCR across all types of disputes including Small Claims, Eviction, Fee Disputes, Parenting, and Juvenile matters.

Previously, she specialized in commercial and employment litigation at Winston & Strawn and Sheppard Mullin in Chicago. She then joined TNTF (The New Teacher Project), a national non-profit that aims to end educational inequality, where she consulted with K-12 public school district officials and state level policy makers regarding teacher preparation and retention.

IN MEMORIUM
MICHAEL NATHANSON



CCR honors the life and legacy of longtime volunteer mediator, facilitator, and trainer Michael Nathanson, who passed away unexpectedly in July 2025. Michael loved CCR—both its people and its process—and his dedication shaped our community in lasting ways. He was a trusted guide for new mediators, helping them understand and confidently navigate the mediation process. Whenever CCR introduced a new program or initiative, Michael was among the first to offer his support, always bringing a distinctive perspective and thoughtful voice. More than a “jack of all trades,” he mastered each role he embraced. His diverse work and life experience enriched his more than 40 years of invaluable service to CCR. While Michael’s absence is deeply felt, his impact will continue to inspire us for years to come.



2024-2025 DONORS

CCR continues to thrive thanks to the generosity of so many organizations and individuals. To all of our contributors, we extend our most sincere gratitude.

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GRANT SPOTLIGHT

The **AAA-ICDR Foundation** awarded Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) a \$75,000 grant in which to implement the 'Expanding Volunteer Mediator Diversity for More Impactful Community Mediation' initiative which kicked off Phase 1 in March 2024 and concluded Phase 4 in May 2025.

This initiative was in alignment with one of CCR's strongly held strategic goals to: Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to better serve our clients and communities; Strengthen volunteer recruitment and retention, with a focus on DEI.

Part of the process included critical questioning of assumptions in the current program and their impact on DEI, rebuilding the way the current application, screening, interview and selection processes work, and improving how data is used to measure outcomes.

CCR engaged a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) partner, **inQUEST Consulting**, to conduct the equity audit of the MMP to understand what was preventing the organization's volunteer mediator pool from fully reflecting the diversity of the communities it serves. **Resolution Systems Institute** evaluated the project, assessing efficacy of the changes and publishing a report of their findings

Previous Process

Written application with multi-page, essay responses

"Blind" application in which candidates do not share demographic or identifying information

Traditional one-on-one interviews

Rubric with criteria equally weighted



[For more information regarding CCR's Volunteer Equity Project please click here or scan the QR code https://tinyurl.com/mpmkrxs5](https://tinyurl.com/mpmkrxs5)

[For more information regarding Resolution Systems Institute's report Fostering Equity in a Volunteer Mediator Roster https://tinyurl.com/mr35rkyw](https://tinyurl.com/mr35rkyw)

New Process

Simple submission of interest form with fill-in-the-blank questions

Application with option to self-report demographic information

Matching Events with co-facilitators

Rubric with criteria weighted based on relevance to mediation

CCR In-Kind Donors 2024 and 2025

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Avec River North
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Berghoff Restaurant
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Statement of Activities: 2024

(for year ended May 31, 2024)

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE			
Contributions of cash and other financial assets			
Grants and contributions	\$ 1,470,095	\$ 44,465	\$ 1,514,560
Dispute Resolution Center Act Grant	300,000		300,000
Contributed nonfinancial assets	146,913		146,913
Special event revenue	237,782		237,782
Less: Costs of direct benefits to donors	(43,097)		(43,097)
Training fees	239,911		239,911
Rental income	16,268		16,268
Other revenue	65,317		65,317
Interest income	163		163
Net support and revenue	2,433,352	44,465	2,477,817
Net assets released from restrictions	49,233	(49,233)	
Total Support and Revenue	2,482,585	(4,768)	2,477,817
EXPENSES			
Program services			
Mediation services	1,761,524		1,761,524
Training	468,500		468,500
Total Program Services	2,230,024		2,230,024
SUPPORTING SERVICES			
Management and general	179,197		179,197
Fundraising	85,835		85,835
Total Supporting Services	265,032		265,032
Total Expenses	2,495,056		2,495,056
Change in Net Assets	(12,471)	(4,768)	(17,239)
NET ASSETS			
Beginning of year	791,141	49,233	840,374
End of Year	\$ 778,670	\$ 44,465	\$ 823,135

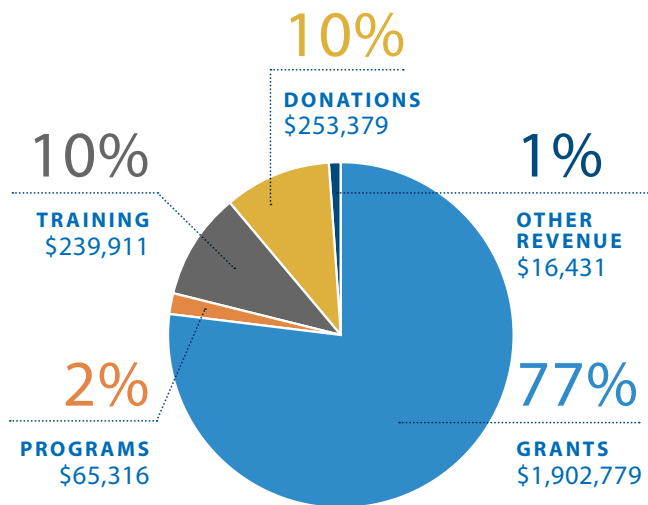
Statement of Activities: 2025

(for year ended May 31, 2025)

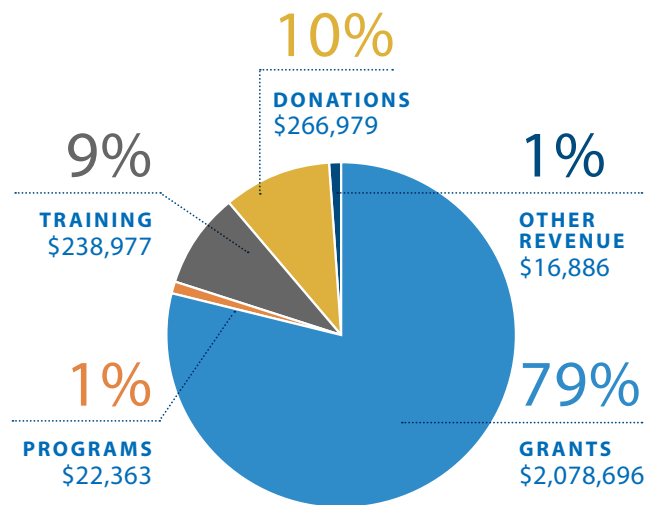
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE			
Contributions of cash and other financial assets			
Grants and contributions	\$ 1,644,261	\$ 46,250	\$ 1,690,511
Dispute Resolution Center Act Grant	300,000		300,000
Contributed nonfinancial assets	191,843		191,843
Special event revenue	216,762		216,762
Less: Costs of direct benefits to donors	(53,441)		(53,441)
Training fees	238,977		238,977
Rental income	16,587		16,587
Other revenue	22,499		22,499
Interest income	163		163
Net support and revenue	2,577,651	46,250	2,623,901
Net assets released from restrictions	44,465	(44,465)	
Total Support and Revenue	2,622,116	1,785	2,623,901
EXPENSES			
Program services			
Mediation services	1,968,513		1,968,513
Training	493,756		493,756
Total Program Services	2,462,269		2,462,269
SUPPORTING SERVICES			
Management and general	204,976		204,976
Fundraising	93,359		93,359
Total Supporting Services	298,335		298,335
Total Expenses	2,760,604		2,760,604
Change in Net Assets	(138,488)	1,785	(136,703)
NET ASSETS			
Beginning of year	778,670	44,465	823,135
End of Year	\$ 640,182	\$ 46,250	\$ 686,432

Financial Snapshot

FY24 REVENUE



FY25 REVENUE



Ways to Give

One Time Donation

<https://www.ccrchicago.org/one-time-donation-form>

Recurring Donation

<https://www.ccrchicago.org/monthly-donation-form>

CCR Training Scholarship

<https://www.ccrchicago.org/ccr-training-scholarship>

Donate Securities

wtrumble@ccrchicago.org

MORE WAYS TO GIVE

- Qualified Charitable Distribution (to learn how to make a QCD, visit <https://tinyurl.com/s3fcyamj>)
- Donor Advised Fund
- Matching Gifts
- Beneficiary Designations
- Bequests through Wills or Revocable (Living) Trusts

For more information or questions, please contact CCR's Interim Executive Director Whitney Trumble at wtrumble@ccrchicago.org





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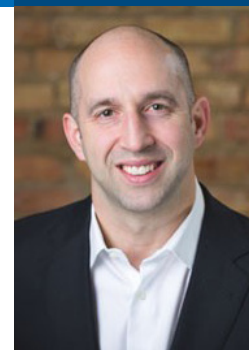
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Yehemy Zavala Orozco
Bilingual Programs Manager-Mediation Services

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Jonathan Kim
Cassie Lively
Ryland Rich
Angelica Serrano
A.Z. Wang
Njeri Williams
Erin Woolard

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