

## **SCHOOL CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS**

The Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center (aka Wayne Mediation Center) is a community based nonprofit and has provided conflict resolution services in Metropolitan Detroit for many years. WCDRC currently handles around 3,500 disputes each year referred by courts, schools and other entities, and has provided conflict resolution services to more than thirty five schools throughout Wayne County in the past few years.

WCDRC's school conflict resolution specialists generally have extensive experience with children and/or dispute resolution methods, and all have taken extensive advanced training in the specific conflict resolution program being delivered. Most also have taken the forty hour Michigan State Court Administrative Office approved mediation training and all have undergone state background checks.

### **Restorative Conferencing**

Purpose: Increase school safety, reduce student suspensions and conflict, improve school climate.

Impact: Participants determine how to repair harm caused by the act of one or more students.

**Restorative conferencing provides a model to consider past actions, consequences and to change future behavior.** It can also be used to reduce suspensions for fighting or other harmful behavior, thereby improving students' chances of graduation.

How it works: A WCDRC facilitator is provided a location in the school for between 15 and 30 hours per week. Whenever a dispute arises, the facilitator is notified and engages with all of the parties affected. The facilitator then oversees a process focused upon repairing the harm resulting from the behavior, including appropriate consequences. In the great majority of cases, an agreement is reached and a written behavior plan results and is provided to the school. The facilitator later follows up with the participants to ensure that the agreement is followed.

### **Community Building/Mentorship Circles**

Purpose: Provide a sense of community, security, and belonging to struggling students.

Impact: Improves school culture by reducing conflict and disruptive behavior, providing opportunity for students needing mentorship to meet in a safe, consistent, and supportive environment. Students participating report improved attendance, increased general interest in school and better grades.

How it works: For each Circle, the school selects six to eight male or female students who are facing particular issues (e.g., bullying, anger, diversity, LGBT) or generally struggling. A facilitator meets with the students together once per week for an hour for the entire school year. The facilitator guides the discussion about topics that are important to members of the group and especially focus upon future goals, values and behavior. The focus is upon the group becoming a small community and part of an improved larger school community.

## **Special Education Mediation, Facilitation and Informational Presentations**

Purpose: At **no cost**, improve understanding with parents and effectively resolve issues involving special education students.

Impact: school districts save precious time and resources by forming better relationships and agreements with parents, avoiding contested hearings and lawsuits.

How it works: Schools or parents of special education students contact WCDRC to request a presentation, IEP facilitation or a mediation of a special education issue. At no cost to the school, WCDRC schedules and provides a specially trained mediator or facilitator to meet the request.

For mediations and facilitations, a WCDRC specialist works collaboratively with parents or guardians of a student with a disability and a representative of the school district to reach mutually agreed upon solutions. **By asking questions and discussing all information with both parties, the mediator helps the parent(s) and the school district representative resolve disagreements, reach a more complete understanding of each other's concerns and agree upon the special education program for the student in a cooperative and timely manner.**

## **Truancy Prevention Mediation**

Purpose: Improve school attendance.

Impact: Truancy Prevention Mediation has proven very effective in reducing the critical problem of unexcused absences that frequently signal the first step along the path to students dropping out and failing to graduate. **In past years, students participating in this program have shown a 55-75% rate of improvement in their attendance.**

How it works:

The school provides a list of students to WCDRC that have truancy issues. WCDRC contacts the student's parents and schedules mediations at the school at a date and time selected by the school. The mediator meets with the student, parent(s) or guardian and the school representative(s) to determine the real impediments to attendance, and in most cases, a mutual agreement is reached to resolve the attendance issues. Sometimes this requires additional services being introduced to the families. The mediator follows up with the school and student to ensure that the agreement is working. **This program requires a strong commitment by the school to improve attendance.**

## **Peer Facilitation/Restorative Conferencing Program**

Purpose: Improve school culture and safety.

Impact: Peer facilitation engages and teaches student facilitators and participants to resolve conflict through a collaborative, peaceful process and empowers students to take responsibility and handle minor conflict.

How it will work in the school: Peer facilitation is an add-on component to the adult facilitated restorative conferencing, listed above. WCDRC staff train select number of students in restorative facilitation. Trained students then co-facilitate the conferences with the facilitator on a rotating basis.

### **Restorative Classroom Circles Training:**

Purpose: Increase teacher control of classroom, improve student behavior and school climate.

Impact: Classroom Circles assist teachers in building a restorative culture that sets expectations and standards, instills positive discipline and enables teachers to more effectively and efficiently prevent and handle student behavioral issues.

How it Works: WMC's specially trained instructor/facilitator conducts a two day training of teachers. The first day is primarily focused upon the principles and benefits of restorative practices and how they can be instilled throughout the whole school. The second day consists mainly of learning about and creating effective classroom circles. The days can be split into blocks if preferred.

WMC's trainer/facilitator then returns three times over the following four months to conduct three hours of follow up coaching and training. Additional sessions can be purchased if requested.

### **Peer Facilitation/Restorative Conferencing Training:**

Purpose: Prevent escalation of student conflict, improve school culture and safety.

Impact: Peer facilitation engages and teaches students to resolve conflict through a collaborative, peaceful process and empowers students to take responsibility and handle minor conflict.

How it works: WMC's specially trained instructor/facilitator conducts a two day training of students and staff. The first day is primarily focused upon the principles and benefits of restorative practices and how they can be instilled throughout the whole school. The second day is focused upon the Restorative Conferencing process for resolving conflict, a model to engage those involved in conflict to repair the harm caused by their behavior.

WMC's trainer/facilitator then returns three times over the following four months to conduct three hours of follow up coaching and training. Additional sessions can be purchased if requested.

## **Other Conflict Resolution Workshops and Training**

WCDRC can provide short or extensive conflict resolution workshops or training for students, teachers, and families on a variety of topics. **Following the training, WCDRC can implement any program selected and can coach school staff for as long as necessary to ensure the success of the program.**