



## Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution Meeting *(Virtual)* Wednesday, August 20, 2025

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

*\*Via Zoom*

### AGENDA

- Welcome: Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris
- Roll call
- Meeting Minutes from May 14, 2025: *Approved via email*
- Standing Committee Reports:
  - Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Carrie B. Markham
  - Ethics Committee: Chief Presiding Judge Renata Turner
  - Training and Credentials Committee: Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder
  - Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray
  - DV Rules Committee: Ms. Peggy Wilson
- Special Committee Report:
  - Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer
- GODR Report: Ms. Tracy Johnson & Ms. Karlie Sahs
  - Probate Court Mediation Handbook
  - 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual ADR Institute
  - Strategic Projects List
  - Upcoming conferences:
    - Georgia Council of Court Administrators, September 21-24, Savannah
- New Business
- Chairman's Report: Chief Judge Morris
- Old Business
- Final 2025 Commission Meeting: December 10 @ 11 a.m. in Dalton *(in person)*
- Adjournment

*\*Please email [gaodr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gaodr@georgiacourts.gov) by 5 p.m. on August 19, to receive the Zoom link for viewing.*



# Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution

## Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

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Chair M. Cindy Morris called the meeting to order. In addition to Chief Judge Morris, Commission members and Office staff present were:

Chair-Elect Carrie B. Markham; Hon. Clarence Cuthpert Jr.; Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder; Judge Quinn Kasper; Patrick T. O'Connor; Peggy Roth; and Randall Weiland.

Tracy B. Johnson, Executive Director; and Karlie A. Sahs, Deputy Director.

JC/AOC staff members present were Carole Griffith, Staff Attorney; and Andres Bosque, Lead Data Analyst.

The following guests observed by video: Lynn Ansley, 7<sup>th</sup> JAD ADR Program; Vanessa Billings, Eastern Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Abby Carter, Gwinnett Courts ADR Program; Lakesiya Cofield, Fulton County ADR Program; Shanna Boges Diamond, Dougherty Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Jan East, Dublin Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Melissa Hughes, Tifton Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Rebecca Lew, Cobb County Superior Court ADR Program; Caitlin Livingston, DeKalb Dispute Resolution Center; Valerie Lyle, 9<sup>th</sup> JAD ADR Program; Pam Manning, The Mediation of the Coastal Empire; Sebina Medina, Conasauga Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Lindsay Mobley, Coweta Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Jody Overcash, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Liesl Owen, 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District ADR Program; Carlene Redmond, Cobb County Juvenile Court ADR Program; Lee Robbins, The Mediation Center of the Coastal Empire; Olivia Rudder-Wilson, DeKalb County Juvenile Court ADR Program; and Shannon Watts, Southern Judicial Circuit ADR Program.

### **I. Welcome**

Chief Judge Morris called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

### **II. Roll Call of GCDR Members**

Chief Judge Morris asked Ms. Karlie Sahs to conduct a roll call of all GCDR members.

### **III. Meeting Minutes from May 14, 2025: *Approved via email***

The minutes of the May Commission meeting were approved prior to the meeting via e-mail vote on June 6, 2025.

### **IV. Standing Committee Reports:**

#### **a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Carrie B. Markham**

Budget documents for the current fiscal year (FY2025) were included in the meeting materials. Judge Markham advised that revenues for FY2025 finished slightly below that of FY2024, and total expenditures increased as a result of both increased program utilization of ScheduleADR and the February 2025 Court ADR Program Directors' Conference. Final operating expenditures were 98% of the total approved budget. The overall fund balance decreased relative to the prior fiscal year, reflecting strategic use of resources aligned with program goals and long-term investments.

No further budgetary issues or personnel matters were noted.

**b. Ethics Committee: Ms. Carole Griffith, Esq.**

The Committee on Ethics last met on August 13, 2025.

On behalf of Committee Chair Chief Presiding Judge Renata Turner, Ms. Griffith reported that since the last Commission meeting, two (2) complaints have been received. Of those, one (1) is still under review by staff has been dismissed, and one (1) resulted in a private reprimand against the neutral. There is one (1) outstanding complaint which will move forward for a hearing on September 10, 2025.

Staff are reviewing pending new neutral applications which flagged potential ethics concerns. There are no outstanding applications for review or pending appeals at this time.

The Ethics Committee will meet next on October 8, 2025.

**c. Training and Credentials Committee: Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder**

The Committee on Training and Credentials last met on July 15, 2025.

Judge Rieder reported that the Committee evaluated two (2) Inactive status reinstatement requests; the neutrals were required to pay the reinstatement fee and review Georgia Uniform Mediation Act (GUMA) continuing education materials.

The Committee also discussed the Superior Court Judge Domestic Relations Mediation request, which was reviewed at the last Commission meeting. This was an initial conversation regarding possible modifications to the Domestic Relations Mediation training. The Committee will continue to evaluate the request and develop recommendations for any possible action, including potential training revisions.

There are no outstanding appeals.

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for September 3, 2025.

**d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Randall Weiland**

The Outreach Committee last met on June 23.

Mr. Randall Weiland reported on behalf of Committee Chair Mr. Hal Gray and shared that, following the June meeting, the Committee sent an outreach letter to Chief Judge Nancy Bills – the new Chief Judge in Rockdale County. Chief Judge Bills acknowledged the letter, and the Committee is awaiting guidance on how they may assist the court. Mr. Weiland continues to work with the Waycross Judicial Circuit to develop a new ADR program, but there are no new updates at this time. The Committee also discussed options for reaching out to counties that remain underserved by ADR and do not yet have an ADR program, and circulated an updated list to Committee members after the meeting

The committee's next meeting is set for August 25, 2025.

**e. Domestic Violence Rules Committee: Ms. Johnson**

On behalf of Committee Chair Peggy Wilson, Ms. Johnson shared that the Committee does not have any new activity to report since the May 2025 GCDR meeting.

The Committee will meet sometime in fall 2025 (TBD).

## **V. Special Committee Report:**

### **a. Judicial Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder**

The working group last held meetings on June 13 and August 15, 2025.

On behalf of Committee Chair Pandora Palmer, Judge Rieder stated that, to focus working group efforts, the working group formed two subcommittees: Training and Qualifications, chaired by Judge Palmer, and Ethical Considerations, chaired by Judge Rieder. Both subcommittees met in July to begin identifying the core elements of their respective recommendations. The Training and Qualifications Subcommittee has been working to define the essential skills and knowledge judges need to conduct effective settlement conferences, identifying the core components of a JHSC training, and discussing possible prerequisites for registration. The Ethical Considerations Subcommittee has been reviewing the ethical standards for registered neutrals to determine what general and process-specific provisions may need to be added or modified for judges serving in a JHSC role. Additional subcommittee meetings are scheduled for September and October to continue this work.

The working group is also collecting and reviewing forms, protocols, and best practices currently in use across Georgia to inform our recommendations. Engagement from members – including senior judges, court administrators, and other experienced stakeholders – has been very positive, with active participation and thoughtful contributions to the discussions. The working group anticipates that a draft or final recommendations will be completed before the end of 2025.

The full working group will meet next on October 24, 2025.

## **VI. GODR Report: Ms. Tracy Johnson & Ms. Karlie Sahs**

### **a. Probate Court Mediation Handbook**

The joint project to formalize the expansion of mediation in Probate Courts has concluded with the publication of the Probate Court Mediation Handbook. Courts interested in receiving a link to the digital publication should reach out to GODR at [gaodr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gaodr@georgiacourts.gov).

### **b. 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual ADR Institute**

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual ADR Institute will be held on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center. For the first time, a request for proposals was distributed to solicit proposals for conference sessions. The response was robust, and selected sessions will support the keynote speaker Kwame Christian – attorney, author, founder of American Negotiation Institute, thought-leader, and host of the #1 negotiation podcast *Negotiate Anything*.

Early Bird registration is open through September 1, and regular registration is open through November 10. Interested persons can learn more at <https://www.adr-institute.com/>.

A reminder was made to Commission members that a survey went out regarding ADR Institute attendance. Members were asked to complete the survey as soon as possible, whether or not they plan to attend the event.

### c. Strategic Projects & Events

Updates to the Strategic Projects & Events are as follows:

- i. **GODR 2.0:** Requested appropriations were not approved as part of the state FY2026 budget. GODR has submitted a white paper for FY2027, which was approved by the Judicial Council of Georgia Legislative Budget Committee as part of their budget package. The Judicial Council is set to vote on the budget package (as a whole) at their upcoming meeting on August 28.
- ii. **Data Collection & Reporting:** The current focus is on data fidelity; reports from calendar years 2023 & 2024 are being drafted and are expected to be published before the end of 2025. GODR is working with the AOC IT division on methods for data reporting from court ADR programs not utilizing ScheduleADR. Enhanced reporting of collected data is also being researched.
- iii. **Neutral Registration System:** On behalf of the JC/AOC IT Division, Mr. Ben Luke relayed the following updates:
  1. **Customer Service Metrics** – AOC has strengthened the focus on customer service KPIs such as time to resolution, time to first response, calls handled, and calls missed. Each of these measures has reached all-time highs, ensuring our team remains responsive, timely, and effective in serving constituents.
  2. **Cross-Training for Continuity** – The support team is actively cross-training to reduce delays caused by specialization. More staff can now handle a broader range of requests, improving responsiveness even during absences or scheduling conflicts.
  3. **Application Development** – GCR continues to mature through ongoing development. The AOC maintains a robust register of feature requests, bugs, and enhancements, and developer resources are actively working through this backlog to steadily improve the application.
  4. **Statewide CMS Integration** – Initial conversations have begun regarding an ADR module within the statewide CMS initiative. While this is forecasted as a post-MVP effort (likely Q2 2026), the AOC is building with future integration in mind. Additional discovery will help refine scope and timelines.
- iv. **Court Program Support:** GODR completed ScheduleADR onboarding for the Alapaha Judicial Circuit ADR Program on July 8. Ms. Rita Carroll, program director for the Carroll County ADR Program has resigned; orientation with the new director, Ms. Savannah House, is scheduled for August 22.
- v. **Court Program Evaluations:** Evaluations are projected to start in 2026. Until then, GODR staff will be working on developing the necessary evaluation forms. It is hoped that the funding request will pass, and additional staff will assist with this project.
- vi. **Judicially Hosted Settlement Conferences (JHSC)/Evaluative Processes and Program Director Conference and ADR Institute:** discussed previously during the meeting. **Expansion of Neutral Services, Juvenile Court ADR Programs, and Program Director Conference:** No new updates to report.

### d. Upcoming Conferences

- i. **Georgia Council of Court Administrators September 22-24, Savannah;** Ms. Johnson and Ms. Sahs will attend

## **VII. Chairman's Report: Chief Judge Morris**

Chief Judge Morris advised that the FY2027 budget endeavor will be bolstered by expanded legislative backing and encouraged Commission members to reach out to legislators they know to garner support. She also reminded members that any communications about the impending funding request should be fielded by GODR.

Additionally, Chief Judge Morris noted that there will be membership changes made at the December 2025 meeting, and any current members wishing to roll off the Commission should let her know.

Lastly, Chief Judge Morris shared the news that GODR Executive Director Tracy Johnson recently became a first-time grandmother ("Nona") with the birth of her grandson Carson.

## **VIII. Old Business**

There was no old business to report.

## **IX. Final 2025 Commission Meeting: December 10 @ 11 a.m. in Dalton (*in-person*)**

A Commission member logistics survey (for lodging and catering needs) is forthcoming. The 2026 Commission meeting dates will be published by the end of the year.

## **X. Adjournment**

The meeting concluded at approximately 2:31 p.m.

*[Minutes prepared by Karlie A. Sahs and Tracy B. Johnson]  
[Minutes approved via email September 12, 2025]*