



Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution Meeting

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

11:00 – 12:00 p.m.

Livestream only

Please email gaodr@georgiacourts.gov by COB on December 9 to receive the livestream link

AGENDA

- I. Welcome: Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris
- II. Roll call
- III. Meeting Minutes from August 20, 2025: *Approved via email*
- IV. Public Discipline of Mr. Danny Naggiar
- V. Standing Committee Reports:
 - a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Carrie B. Markham
 - b. Ethics Committee: Ms. Carole Griffith
 - c. Training and Credentials Committee: Hon. Rebecca Crumrine Rieder
 - d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray
 - e. DV Rules Committee: Ms. Peggy Wilson
- VI. Special Committee Report:
 - a. Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer
- VII. GODR Report: Ms. Tracy Johnson & Ms. Karlie Sahs
 - a. ADR Institute Recap
 - b. Strategic Projects update
- VIII. New Business:
 1. Action Item: Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program Application
- IX. Chairman's Report: Chief Judge Morris
- X. Special Recognition for Commission Service:
 - a. Members Mr. Staten Bitting, Judge Clarence Cuthpert, Ms. Nicole Hull, and Ms. Peggy Wilson
 - b. Chair Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris
- XI. Old Business
- XII. 2026 Commission Dates: February 25 (*in-person*); May 13 (*virtual*); August 19 (*virtual*); and December 9 (*in-person*)
- XIII. Adjournment



Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

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; N. Staten Bitting Jr., Esq.; Hon. Rebecca Crumrine Rieder; Hal Gray, Esq.; Nicole W. Hull, Esq.; Judge Quinn Kasper; Patrick T. O'Connor; Judge Pandora E. Palmer; Sr. Judge Jack Partain; Peggy Roth; Randall Weiland; and Peggy Wilson.

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

JC/AOC staff members present were Carole Griffith, Staff Attorney; Ben Luke, Chief Technology Officer; and Bruce Shaw, Communications & Outreach Specialist. Cynthia Clanton, Director, observed via livestream.

The following guests present include: Lynn Ansley, 7th JAD ADR Program; Jason James, Dalton Municipal Court; Rob McNiff, University of Georgia School of Law; Steve Milner; Danny Naggiar, Naggiar & Sarif, LLC; Danny Price, Berry College; Emma Reigel; Todd Reigel; and Rob Wilson. TJ BeMent, 10th JAD ADR Program; Vanessa Billings, Eastern Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Kristen Cushman, Atlantic Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Adam Gleklen, The Gleklen Firm; Melissa Heard, Justice Center of Atlanta; Kizmet Lester, DeKalb County Dispute Resolution Center; Rebecca Lew, Cobb County Superior Court ADR Program; Rebecca McLellan, The Gleklen Firm; Jody Overcash, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit ADR Program; and Kathleen Sterne, Clayton Judicial Circuit ADR Program observed via livestream

I. Welcome

Chief Judge Morris called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.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 August 20, 2025: *Approved via email*

The minutes of the May Commission meeting were approved prior to the meeting via e-mail vote on September 12, 2025.

IV. Public Discipline of Mr. Danny Naggiar

Chief Judge Morris issued the discipline of registered neutral Danny Naggiar, who was present at the meeting. A copy of the discipline was included with meeting materials.¹

¹ A copy of the written discipline is included in the minutes as an appendix.

V. 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 the year-to-date financial pattern of activity is typical for early in the fiscal year, when several major obligations either post or are encumbered before payment. Expenditures are expected to balance out as additional fee revenue is collected later in the fiscal year. The operating budget aligns with expectations for this point in the fiscal year, though there is one outlier – GODR'S annual contract for service with the Administrative Office of the Courts, which is an encumbrance and not an expenditure. Special Projects expenditures account for approximately 40% of the annual budget, supporting such initiatives as ScheduleADR maintenance, mediator training initiatives, office travel, and other statewide ADR efforts. As final invoices are processed, total expenses for the ADR Institute are expected to remain within its approved budget.

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, there were two (2) outstanding complaints against neutrals. Of those, one (1) was dismissed and one (1) proceeded forward to a hearing. The outcome of the hearing resulted in a public reprimand for the mediator, as addressed earlier in the meeting. Additionally, the Committee has received three (3) additional complaints, all of which are under preliminary review by staff.

There are also a few new neutral applications under staff review for possible ethics concerns. There are no pending appeals at this time.

The Ethics Committee will meet next on February 18, 2026.

c. Training and Credentials Committee: Hon. Rebecca Crumrine Rieder

The Committee on Training and Credentials last met on November 12, 2025.

Judge Rieder reported that the Committee reviewed an inactive request that sought to waive the renewal requirements. The neutral asked for this waiver due to a serious medical diagnosis which prevented them from keeping their registration current. The neutral was required to pay the regular \$150 renewal fee, review Georgia Uniform Mediation Act (GUMA) continuing education materials, and review 6 hours of content from the ADR Institute.

Judge Rieder also shared that the request for a truncated Domestic Relations Mediation training course for judges and the Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference projects are both still ongoing. Judge Rieder and Ms. Tracy Johnson plan to meet in January to further strategize the Domestic Relations Mediation training for judges.

There are no outstanding appeals.

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2026.

d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray

The Outreach Committee last met on August 25, 2025.

Mr. Gray reported the Waycross Judicial Circuit has submitted an application for a new court ADR program, which was slated on the meeting agenda Commission review. The Committee appreciates Mr. Randall Weiland's continued work in helping expand ADR services to this circuit.

In Rockdale County, communication has continued with both the clerk and the court administrator, but there are no developments to report at this time. Follow up will continue with both offices to assess any progress toward establishing a program.

Committee members remain mindful of the need for legislative support for GODR's budget requests. Additional funding is essential to maintain ScheduleADR and to increase staff capacity for day-to-day operations. Limited staffing was noted as an ongoing challenge that continues to restrict the scope of work the office is able to undertake. Mr. Gray asked the Commission to consider sharing the need for support with any legislative contacts they may have.

The Committee is still exploring options for developing model forms for mediators statewide. Standardized forms would support consistency and strengthen the fidelity of statewide data collection. This will be a priority item on next year's Committee agenda.

The committee is working to set meeting dates for 2026, to be determined prior to the end of the calendar year.

e. Domestic Violence Rules Committee: Ms. Peggy Wilson

Ms. Wilson shared that the Committee does not have any new activity to report since the August 2025 GCDR meeting.

As it was her last meeting with the Commission, Chief Judge Morris noted how valuable Ms. Wilson's contributions have been to the intersection of ADR and family violence. Both Chief Judge Morris and Ms. Wilson served together on the Georgia Commission on Family Violence.

The Committee's next meeting is TBD.

VI. Special Committee Report:

a. Judicial Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer

Co-Chair Pandora Palmer stated that the full JHSC Working Group has met twice since the Commission's August 20 meeting, and each of the two subcommittees has now held its second meeting as well. The most recent full meeting, held on October 24, allowed the working group to take a closer look at several key components of the framework we are developing and to identify the areas where additional drafting and consultation will be most helpful.

The two subcommittees operating under the working group include the Training and Qualifications Subcommittee, which Judge Palmer chairs, and the Ethical Considerations Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Rieder. The subcommittees provide the ability to dive more deeply into the specifics of this work. Both groups have made steady progress. The Training and Qualifications Subcommittee is continuing to shape recommendations on minimum judicial experience, specialized training, continuing education, and the structure of JHSC registration. The Ethics Subcommittee is focusing on

standards tailored specifically for judges conducting settlement conferences, which differ in important ways from mediator ethics and must be aligned carefully with judicial conduct obligations.

The final meeting of the working group for year 2025 was originally scheduled for December 18, but that meeting has been moved to February 6 to allow for more time to work through the questions raised in October and to incorporate input from the upcoming consultation with the Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC).

The working group continues to benefit from strong engagement from judges, senior judges, court administrators, and other stakeholders. Judge Palmer noted that the group is especially grateful to former Chief Justice Michael Boggs for adding his perspective to the discussion. The co-chairs expect to bring forward well-developed recommendations from the working group once outstanding elements of the work have been completed.

The full working group will meet next on February 6, 2026.

VII. GODR Report: Ms. Tracy Johnson & Ms. Karlie Sahs

a. ADR Institute Recap

Ms. Sahs highlighted the overall structure of the conference agenda, noting specifically the plenary sessions by Kwame Christian – attorney, instructor, and host of the #1 negotiation podcast worldwide. In all, approximately 555 attendees were in-person (170) or livestreamed (385) the conference (not including staff, sponsors, and volunteers), held on November 19, 2025, at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center in Atlanta. Additionally, there were 7 total sponsors of the event: Henning Mediation and Arbitration, Inc; FourthParty; JAMS; American Arbitration Association (AAA); Center for Conflict Management at Kennesaw State University; The Mediation Center of the Coastal Empire; and Miles Mediation & Arbitration.

Ms. Sahs shared the Office’s gratitude for those who made the event a success, including the IT Division of the JC/AOC (including the Georgia Courts Registrar staff); the Georgia Child Support Commission Staff; law student volunteers from the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, and Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School; and the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center staff.

Mr. Caleb Davies is the recipient of the 2025 Chief Justice Harold G. Clarke Award, which is presented annually at the ADR Institute.

GODR is tentatively planning to host the 33rd Annual ADR Institute on November 19, 2026.

b. Strategic Projects & Events

Updates to the Strategic Projects & Events are as follows:

- i. GODR 2.0:** At their August 28 meeting, the Judicial Council approved a FY2027 budget package, which included two GODR funding requests for 1) ScheduleADR and 2) an additional staff person. The Judicial Council budget request will go before the appropriate legislative committees for consideration prior to both legislative houses casting final votes on the state budget during the upcoming legislative session (January 12 through April 2).
- ii. Data Collection & Reporting:** The CY 2023 and CY 2024 data reports are currently being drafted and are expected to be published by and reported at the Commission meeting in February. General enhancements to reporting are being explored while work is underway with the JC/AOC IT Division on methods for non-ScheduleADR reporting.

- iii. **Neutral Registration System:** On behalf of the JC/AOC IT Division, Mr. Ben Luke provided a comprehensive update, including cross-training for the support team and ongoing improvements to customer support via service metrics. The IT Division is also working on Georgia Courts Registrar application development updates to improve the neutral module, including a new “Pending CE Status” to differentiate requirements for batch registration renewal notifications.
- iv. **Court Program Support:** GODR completed an orientation on November 24 with Kizmat Lester, the new DeKalb County Dispute Resolution Center’s court ADR program director. Schedule ADR onboarding for the Atlantic Judicial Circuit ADR Program is scheduled for December 16.
- v. **Judicially Hosted Settlement Conferences (JHSC)/Evaluative Processes and ADR Institute:** discussed previously during the meeting. **Court Program Evaluations, Expansion of Neutral Services, Juvenile Court ADR Programs, and Program Director Conference:** No new updates to report.

VIII. New Business

1. Action Item: Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program Application

With the developmental assistance of Randall Weiland, who serves as the District Court Administrator for Georgia’s First District, the Waycross Judicial Circuit submitted an application for a new court ADR program. The Waycross Judicial Circuit includes 6 counties (Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Coffee, Pierce, and Ware) and, if approved, would increase statewide court-connect ADR coverage from 111 counties to 117 (of 159 total counties in Georgia).

Judge Quinn Kasper posed a question regarding process for referrals in Magistrate Courts. It was acknowledged that procedures would be more narrowly defined once the program is approved.

Judge Kasper made a motion to approve the Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program’s application. Judge Rieder seconded the motion. All present Commission members voted in favor of the motion to approve, and no abstentions were made.

IX. Chairman’s Report: Chief Judge Morris

Chief Judge Morris shared that Raytheon “Raye” Rawls, Esq., had retired from the JW Fanning Institute on November 30, 2025. Raye Rawls is a pioneer of ADR in Georgia and a champion of the work nationwide and internationally. Ms. Rawls served on the Commission from 2002 to 2007 and remains active, serving on both the Committee on Training & Credentials and the Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group. Congratulations and gratitude were shared among the group.

Chief Judge Morris also congratulated Judge Palmer on the completion of her Master’s in Judicial Studies. Judge Palmer plans to continue her education by enrolling in a doctoral program within the same academic discipline.

X. Special Recognition for Commission Service

a. Members Mr. Staten Bitting, Judge Clarence Cuthpert, Ms. Nicole Hull, and Ms. Peggy Wilson

Chief Judge Morris recognized outgoing members N. Staten Bitting Jr., Hon. Clarence Cuthpert Jr., Nicole W. Hull, and Peggy McCoy Wilson for their many years of service to the Commission. Mr. Bitting had served since 2020, Judge Cuthpert had served since 2020 (and as Chair of the Committee on Budget & Personnel since 2023), Ms. Hull served since 2019 (and as Co-Chair of

the Committee on Training & Credentials since 2022), and Ms. Wilson served since 2020 (and as Chair of the DV Rules Committee since 2021).

b. Chair Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris

Chief Judge Morris was also recognized for her outstanding contributions during her time on the Commission; Judge Markham presented her with a Supreme Court Resolution, signed by Chief Justice Nels Peterson. While it was not her final meeting, it was Judge Morris' last time presiding over the meeting as its Chair. Judge Morris was appointed to the Commission in 2018 and as Chair-Elect in 2020. She served as the Chair since 2021.

XI. Old Business

There was no old business to report.

XII. 2026 Commission Dates: February 25 (in-person); May 13 (virtual); August 19 (virtual); and December 9 (in-person)

The next meeting is scheduled for February 25 and will be held in person in Newnan. The May 13 and August 19 meetings will be held virtually, and the December 9 meeting will be held in Atlanta at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at approximately 12:05 p.m.

*[Minutes prepared by Karlie A. Sahs and Tracy B. Johnson]
[Minutes approved via email February 13, 2026]*



(L-R) Judge Carrie B. Markham, GCDR Chair-Elect; Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris, GCDR Chair; and Tracy B. Johnson, GODR Executive Director. Photo courtesy of Leah Minter, Communications Coordinator/Graphic Designer Whitfield County



(L-R) Tracy B. Johnson, GODR Executive Director; Judge Carrie B. Markham; Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris, N. Staten Bitting Jr., Esq.; Peggy McCoy Wilson; and Nicole W. Hull, Esq.



GEORGIA COMMISSION ON DISPUTE RESOLUTION

December 10, 2025

Chair

Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris

Chair Elect

Judge Carrie B. Markham

Executive Director

Tracy B. Johnson

Deputy Director

Karlie A. Sahs

Commission Members

Justice John J. Ellington

Presiding Judge Sara L.

Doyle

N. Staten Bitting Jr., Esq.

Judge Rebecca Crumrine

Rieder

Judge Clarence Cuthpert, Jr.

Herbert H. (Hal) Gray III,

Esq.

Nicole Woolfork Hull, Esq.

Judge Quinn M. Kasper

Rep. Rob Leverett, Esq.

Patrick T. O'Connor, Esq.

Judge Pandora E. Palmer

Sr. Judge Jack Partain

Judge Vic Reynolds

Peggy Roth

Chief Judge Renata D.

Turner

Randall Weiland

Peggy McCoy Wilson

Public Reprimand
Formal Complaint No. 2025-2, Danny Naggjar

This public reprimand is issued to Danny Naggjar, who is a registered neutral with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution, in connection to a formal complaint where Mr. Naggjar's actions were found to be inconsistent with the standards of professional conduct and ethical obligations expected in his role as a registered neutral.

In March of 2025, a complaint was filed with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution ("GODR") alleging that Mr. Naggjar had engaged in conduct that violated the Supreme Court of Georgia's Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules, specifically the Self-Determination, Voluntariness, and Fairness standards. Staff for this office conducted a thorough investigation that included interviews with Mr. Naggjar, and the complainant, Mr. Adam Gleklen, document review, and a review of an audio recording of a post-mediation meeting between Mr. Naggjar and parties for which he had previously served as mediator.

A hearing was conducted on September 10, 2025, where the Ethics Committee of the Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution made the following findings:

- On or about December 18, 2024, Mr. Naggjar conducted a mediation session for a divorce action, wherein both parties were represented by counsel. At the mediation session, the parties and their attorneys were present, along with the husband's brother.
- Following the mediation, the husband's brother contacted Mr. Naggjar requesting him to meet with the parties to discuss potential avenues with which to move forward with their case.
- On or about January 8, 2025, Mr. Naggjar met with the husband and wife and the husband's brother on a Zoom call, without the presence of either party's attorneys.
- The wife's attorney, Mr. Gleklen, was not notified of this meeting until after it had occurred, and after the parties had reached a settlement.
- Mr. Gleklen filed this complaint alleging that post mediation communication was improper and violated the ethical standards for neutrals. The ethics committee agreed.



GEORGIA COMMISSION ON DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Ethics Committee found that the conduct described above was in violation of the Supreme Court of Georgia's Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules, namely the self-determination, voluntariness and fairness standards. Specifically, your involvement with the parties following mediation and statements made regarding their ability to seek counsel outside of their current retained attorneys was inappropriate, especially considering Mr. Gleklen was unaware that you were meeting with his client. Further, your offer to send the parties names of attorneys that you knew would work well together, and that you could keep on a short leash, was a gross error in judgment, and severely stepped beyond the role of neutrality that is expected of a mediator.

Though the Ethics Committee understands that it was your intention to help two parties find a resolution, the Committee nonetheless finds that your actions were inconsistent with the standards of professional conduct and ethical obligations expected in your role as a registered neutral.

We wish to impart a few reminders as you move forward in your mediation practice. When communicating with attorneys and other parties associated with a mediation, you should never assume that information you receive from one or more parties/attorneys has been shared with the intended and appropriate parties, particularly where the level of strife between attorneys is elevated. It is your duty to remain neutral throughout the entire process – scheduling to conclusion (and beyond), and you should take care to confirm communication with all parties to ensure everyone is on the same page before proceeding. Additionally, post mediation communications between parties or their attorneys should be limited, and the purpose of those discussions should be clear. As a reminder, your role as a neutral extends into perpetuity, and any communications which threaten to entice you into offering legal advice or strategy to parties should be avoided. Further, where parties are represented, you should only communicate with the parties' attorneys and expressly communicate that duty to parties who seek your services outside the confines of the mediation setting.

Additionally, while it is permissible for you to communicate with third parties, such as a support person to accompany an individual to mediation session, we caution you against engaging in communications with third parties who are not named in a given case. Such communications raise issues of impartiality, and as evidenced here, lead to a breakdown of communication between the necessary parties and attorneys to a case. We implore you to pay attention to the potential for power imbalances, even where the intentions of the parties have been expressed as genuine. Should you find yourself in a position to recommend the services of other attorneys, keep in mind that providing a list of attorneys without expressing your preference is acceptable, identifying and choosing attorneys is not.

Lastly, you are reminded that you are a registered neutral, and your neutrality extends in perpetuity for every case you mediate. The very success and confidence in dispute resolution methods depends on public trust in our registered neutrals to execute mediation sessions with integrity, and to navigate their behavior before and after mediation with grace.

The Commission on Dispute Resolution hereby issues this formal public reprimand to you,



GEORGIA COMMISSION ON DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Danny Naggiar. This reprimand serves as an official expression of disapproval and a reminder of the obligation to uphold the highest standards of conduct in the performance of your duties as a registered neutral. Any future violations of this nature may result in more serious disciplinary actions, up to and including suspension, or a removal from registration.

This reprimand will be made part of the public record and retained in your file with the GODR. Your account with the Georgia Courts Registrar will indicate that you have received a public reprimand, and the Commission plans to issue an ethics opinion to educate our registered neutrals and help them avoid situations similar to this in the future. This matter will be considered in conjunction with any subsequent complaint filed against you.

Sincerely,

Hon. M. Cindy Morris
Chair, Commission on Dispute Resolution