



Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution Meeting (Virtual)
Wednesday, August 19, 2026
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Welcome: Judge Carrie Markham
- II. Roll call
- III. Introduction of new GODR staff member
- IV. Meeting Minutes from May 13, 2026: *Approved via email*
- V. Standing Committee Reports:
 - a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Palmer
 - b. Ethics Committee: Judge Renata Turner
 - c. Training and Credentials Committee: Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder
 - d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray
 - e. DV Rules Committee: Chief Judge Cindy Morris
- VI. Special Committee Report:
 - a. Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer
- VII. GODR Report: Ms. Karlie Sahs
 - a. 33rd Annual ADR Institute
 - b. Strategic Projects update
 - c. Upcoming Conferences:
 1. Georgia Council of Court Administrators Fall Conference: August 29-September 2, Jekyll Island
- VIII. Chairman's Report: Judge Markham
- IX. New Business:
 - a. Action Item: Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program Rules
- X. Old Business
- XI. Upcoming Meeting dates:
 - a. 2026: December 9 (*in-person*)
 - b. 2027: February 24 (*in-person*); May 19 (*remote*); August 25 (*remote*); and December 8 (*in-person*)
- XII. Adjournment

Please email gaodr@georgiacourts.gov by 5 p.m. on August 18 for zoom information.



Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Chair Judge Carrie B. Markham called the meeting to order. In addition to Judge Markham, Commission members and Office staff present were:

Crystal Cooper; Presiding Judge Sara L. Doyle; Hal Gray III, Esq.; Donald Horace, Esq.; Judge Quinn Kasper; Representative Rob Leverett; Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris; Judge Pandora E. Palmer; Peggy Roth; Judge Jason B. Thompson; Chief Judge Renata D. Turner; and Randall Weiland.

Tracy B. Johnson, Executive Director; Karlie A. Sahs, Deputy Director; and Christina J. Frazier, Program Coordinator.

JC/AOC staff members present were: Peterson David, Chief Financial Officer; Carole Griffith, Esq., Assistant General Counsel; Kristy King, Assistant Director of Information Technology; Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, CCFC Division Director; and Amber Range, Court Tools Manager.

The following guests observed by video: Lynn Ansley, 7th JAD ADR Program; Vanessa Billings, Eastern Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Abby Carter, Gwinnett Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Kristin Cushman, Atlantic Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Melissa Hughes, Tift Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Ellen Lahtinen, KSU Center for Conflict Management; Kizmet Lester, DeKalb County Dispute Resolution Center; Rebecca Lew, Cobb County Superior Court ADR Program; Sebina Madina, Conasauga Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Jody Overcash, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Danny Price, Rome Mediation Group; Claire Spivey, Waycross Judicial Circuit; Kathleen Sterne, Esq., Clayton Judicial Circuit ADR Program; and Shannon Watts, Southern Judicial Circuit ADR Program.

I. Welcome

Judge Carrie B. Markham called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Judge Markham asked Ms. Karlie Sahs to conduct the roll call of GCDR members.

III. Introduction of new GODR staff member

Judge Markham introduced Christina J. Frazier, Program Coordinator, who began working with GODR on August 17.

IV. Meeting Minutes from May 13, 2026: *Approved via email*

The minutes of the May 13 Commission meeting were approved via email vote on June 3, 2026.

V. Standing Committee Reports:

a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Pandora Palmer

Judge Markham announced that Judge Pandora Palmer was appointed as the new Chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee. Judge Palmer provided the Committee update. Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 began on July 1, 2026.

The most recent FY 2026 budget report was included in the meeting materials and reflected the Office of Dispute Resolution's FY 2026 financial activity, which closed on June 30. Judge Palmer noted that, overall, FY 2026 closed with revenues modestly exceeding actual expenditures. Revenues increased by approximately 8.8% compared with FY 2025, while actual expenditures decreased by approximately 7%. The Operating Budget closed at 99% spent, with year-end results closely aligning actual obligations with the approved budget. Special Projects Budget expenditures closed at approximately 90% of the annual budgeted amount; this was favorable compared with the FY 2025 Special Projects Budget, which closed at 102% spent. The final budget reviewed was the ADR Institute Budget; year-end expenditures, including outstanding encumbrances, closed at approximately 96%. The year-end summary reflected a balance approximately 6.1% lower than FY 2025.

The Office of Dispute Resolution began FY 2027 in a sound financial position with sufficient reserves to support ongoing obligations.

Judge Jason Thompson asked for clarity regarding budgetary expectations; Ms. Johnson explained that expenditures were on par and that the Office is strategically spending down reserves, with newly reestablished state appropriations allowing the overall budget to hold steady.

The Committee's next meeting is TBD.

b. Ethics Committee: Chief Judge Renata Turner

The Committee on Ethics last met on June 3, 2026.

Judge Turner shared that there are three (3) pending ethics complaints, all of which are under investigation and review. She noted that, since the last GCDR meeting, the Ethics Committee reviewed four (4) applications for neutral registration; three (3) applications were approved, and one (1) application was denied.

There are no pending complaints or appeals at this time.

The Ethics Committee will meet next on October 7, 2026.

c. Training and Credentials Committee: Ms. Carole Griffith

The Committee on Training and Credentials last met on July 22, 2026.

Ms. Carole Griffith reported on behalf of Judge Crumrine Rieder, noting that, at the last meeting, the Committee reviewed one (1) reinstatement request from a neutral in Inactive V status. The neutral was directed to either complete a practicum training or observe no fewer than six (6) hours of mediation with a registered general civil mediator.

The Committee also considered one (1) waiver request. The neutral sought to waive the training requirements to renew registration in General Civil Mediation, Non-Binding Arbitration, and Domestic Relations Mediation. The neutral requested that his extensive professional experience as a neutral be accepted in lieu of the training requirements. The Committee approved the request as it related to General Civil Mediation and Non-Binding Arbitration but denied the request as it related to Domestic Relations Mediation.

There are currently no outstanding appeals.

The Committee will meet next on September 23, 2026.

d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray

The Outreach Committee has not met since the May 13 Commission meeting.

Mr. Gray reported that, at its upcoming meeting on August 27, the Committee will continue its focus on developing a repository of model mediation forms.

Ms. Johnson has been actively working with judicial leadership in Rockdale County to establish a new court ADR program, which Judge Markham addressed further during the Chairman's Report. Mr. Gray expressed thanks to Chief Judge Bills, as well as other judges, the clerk, and the court administrator in Rockdale, for their leadership and commitment to establishing a new program. Mr. Gray further expressed thanks to Committee member Randall Weiland for his continued efforts to expand and strengthen dispute resolution services throughout his district (1st Judicial Administrative District). Over the past several months, Mr. Weiland has made significant progress working with several counties in his district to improve existing services and expand access to dispute resolution.

The Committee will meet next on November 5, 2026.

e. Domestic Violence Rules Committee: Chief Judge Cindy Morris

Judge Markham announced that Judge Cindy Morris was appointed as the new Chair of the Domestic Violence Rules Committee. Judge Morris noted that the Committee had no new matters to report but are looking to schedule a meeting in the coming months.

The Committee's next meeting is TBD.

VI. Special Committee Report

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

Judge Palmer shared that a meeting has been scheduled with Justice John Ellington to discuss the ethical concerns identified by the Working Group. Following that discussion, Justice

Ellington plans to bring these issues to the Supreme Court later in August for its consideration and guidance.

The Working Group remains prepared to resume its discussions once it receives further clarification from the Supreme Court.

VII. GODR Report: Ms. Karlie Sahs

a. 33rd Annual ADR Institute

The 33rd Annual ADR Institute is scheduled for Thursday, November 19, 2026. Ms. Sahs reminded interested Commission members to self-register for the event using the registration code and to complete the associated member needs survey. A follow-up would be sent after the meeting to ensure Commission members had the necessary information.

As of August 18, there were approximately 129 event registrations: 41 in-person and 88 livestream. This was slightly higher than at the same time in 2025. Other than Miles Mediation & Arbitration, all registered sponsors are new this year, including Commission member Judge Crumrine Rieder, who is sponsoring all-day coffee. Ms. Sahs also shared that, for the first time, the Office is able to collect a service fee for all credit card transactions (excluding sponsor sign-up); she thanked the JC/AOC Information Technology and Fiscal Administration Divisions for their efforts in implementing the new feature.

b. Strategic Projects Update

Updates to the strategic projects are as follows:

1. **GODR 2.0:** On August 10, the Judicial Council Budget Committee approved the FY 2027 amended budget request for ScheduleADR. Since only half of the FY 2027 request was funded, the amended budget request would allow the case management system to be fully funded throughout FY 2027. The request will next be presented to the Judicial Council on August 21 for consideration and inclusion in its legislative budget package. Thanks were extended to Commission member Representative Rob Leverett for his continued advocacy for GCDR needs in the legislature.
2. **Data Collection & Reporting:** The 2025 data collection period closed on March 16. The data report is being prepared and will be presented at the next GCDR meeting in December. The Office continues to work with IT on methods for non-ScheduleADR reporting, with an upcoming meeting scheduled.
3. **Neutral Registration System:** The 2026 registration renewal period is set to open on October 1. Work is ongoing to implement a credit card service fee; system capability has been confirmed and adapted in the Georgia Courts Registrar system for interested stakeholders only. Functionality is currently in testing, and implementation is expected prior to the upcoming registration renewal period. An enhancement is also in development for the administration of group event registration; functionality is currently in testing, and implementation is expected prior to the ADR Institute, when this feature will be especially valuable because it is expected to save dozens of staff hours.

4. **Court Program Support:** The Office continues to field ongoing program support requests, including record retention and data storage. These topics will be considered for inclusion in programming at the next Program Director Conference.
5. **Program Director Conference:** The Office is working to schedule the next event in early 2027. The event will be held in Savannah, and staff is actively working to identify dates and a location. Ms. Frazier will be a valuable addition to the planning process.
6. **Court Program Evaluations, Expansion of Neutral Services, Juvenile Court ADR Programs:** no updates to report.
7. **Hosted Settlement Conference (JHSC)/Evaluative Processes & ADR Institute:** updates were provided elsewhere during the meeting.

c. Upcoming Conferences:

1. **Georgia Council of Court Administrators Fall Conference**
August 29 - September 2; Jekyll Island. Ms. Johnson, Ms. Sahs, and Ms. Frazier will attend.

VIII. Chairman's Report: Judge Markham

Judge Markham relayed congratulations to Peggy Roth on her recent marriage to Charlie Eagle on June 19 as well as to Judge Palmer on her recent acceptance to the PhD program for Judicial Studies at the University of Nevada – Reno, which she will begin this fall.

Judge Markham also acknowledged the upcoming retirement of JC/AOC Director, Cynthia Clanton, effective October 1. Ms. Clanton has been a long-time supporter of GCDR, having served as legal liaison prior to her role as JC/AOC Director. The Commission is grateful for her service and wishes her well in her future endeavors.

Thanks were also extended to Justice Bethel and the Judicial Council Budget Committee for their recent support of GCDR's amended FY 2027 budget request.

IX. New/Old Business

a. Action Item: Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program Rules

Ms. Johnson presented the revised Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program Rules for approval. Ms. Claire Spivey of the Waycross Judicial Circuit was present to answer any questions. Mr. Gray made a motion to approve the rules, Judge Morris seconded the motion, and all Commission members present voted in favor without any abstentions. Judge Palmer held the voting proxy for Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder.

The Rockdale Judicial Circuit submitted a new court ADR program application. The application was received shortly before the meeting and therefore could not be added to the agenda. However, Judge Markham recognized that waiting until the December Commission meeting would delay the circuit's efforts. Judge Markham proposed that the Commission schedule a specially set meeting before December to address the application. Absent any objection, Ms. Johnson was asked to coordinate with Rockdale Judicial Circuit leadership and GCDR members

to set a meeting. Judge Quinn Kasper made a motion to adopt the proposal, seconded by Mr. Donald Horace, and all Commission members present voted in favor without any abstentions. Judge Palmer held the voting proxy for Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder.

Judge Markham advised that the Commission plans to recognize members whose terms are scheduled to conclude later this year. She asked any members considering voluntarily rolling off the Commission at the end of the year to let Ms. Johnson know.

X. Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- a. 2026:** December 9 (*in-person*)
- b. 2027:** February 24 (*in-person*); May 19 (*remote*); August 25 (*remote*); and December 8 (*in-person*)

XI. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at approximately 2:39 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by Karlie A. Sahs and Tracy B. Johnson]

[Minutes approved via email on September 18, 2026]