



Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution Meeting (Virtual)
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Please email gaodr@georgiacourts.gov by COB Tuesday, May 12 for the Zoom meeting link

AGENDA

- I. Welcome: Judge Carrie Markham
- II. Roll call
- III. Meeting Minutes from February 25, 2026: *Approved via email*
- IV. Standing Committee Reports:
 - a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Markham
 - 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: Ms. Tracy Johnson
- V. Special Committee Report:
 - a. Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer
- VI. GODR Report: Ms. Karlie Sahs
 - a. 2025 Data Collection
 - b. Strategic Projects update
 - c. Upcoming Conferences:
 1. National Association of Court Management, Jacksonville FL July 12-16
- VII. Chairman's Report: Judge Markham
- VIII. New/Old Business
- IX. 2026 Commission Dates: August 19 (*virtual*) and December 9 (*in-person*)
- X. Executive Session (*Guests are excused*)
- XI. Adjournment



Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 13, 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; Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder; 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; Senior Judge Jack Partain; Peggy Roth; Judge Jason B. Thompson; Chief Judge Renata D. Turner; and Randall Weiland.

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

JC/AOC staff members present were: Peterson David, Chief Financial Officer; Carole Griffith, Esq., Assistant General Counsel; Stephanie Hines, Judicial Services Division Director; Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, CCFC Division Director; and Amber Range, Court Tools Manager.

The following guests observed by video: Shelby Allen, Cobb Judicial Circuit Magistrate ADR Program; Lynn Ansley, 7th JAD ADR Program; Charity Brown, 7th JAD ADR Program; Lakesiya Cofield, Fulton County ADR Program; Jan East, Dublin Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Melissa Heard, Justice Center of Atlanta; Melissa Hughes, Tift Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Jim Hunter, Rome Mediation Group; Kizmet Lester, DeKalb County Dispute Resolution Center; Rebecca Lew, Cobb County Superior Court ADR Program; Sebina Madina, Conasauga Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Lindsay Mobley, Coweta Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Liesl Owen, 6th JAD ADR Program; Danny Price, Rome Mediation Group; Olivia Rudder Wilson, DeKalb County Juvenile Court Mediation Program; Kathleen Sterne, Esq., Clayton Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Shannon Watts, Southern Judicial Circuit ADR Program; and Brittany Whaley, 7th JAD ADR Program.

I. Welcome

Judge Carrie B. Markham called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

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

III. Meeting Minutes from February 25, 2026: *Approved via email*

The minutes of the February 25 Commission meeting were approved via email vote on March 13, 2026.

IV. Standing Committee Reports:

a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Carrie Markham

The Committee on Budget and Personnel last met on April 20, 2026, and approved a proposed FY2027 budget, which was adopted by the Commission during Executive Session.

The most recent FY26 budget report was included in the meeting materials and reflects the Office of Dispute Resolution's year-to-date financial activity through March 31. Judge Markham noted that, as expected at this point in the fiscal year, expenditures have continued to increase as additional obligations and project activity have been posted.

Overall, revenue and expenditures remain stable. Operational expenses are tracking at approximately 82% of the annual budgeted amount, largely because earmarking funds for contractual obligations is a front-loaded process that helps ensure funding availability throughout the fiscal year. Special project expenditures are similarly tracking at approximately 86% of the annual budgeted amount.

The overall pattern of fee revenue and fund balance remains consistent with prior fiscal cycles. Fiscal reserves remain sufficient to support budgeted obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

b. Ethics Committee: Chief Judge Renata Turner

The Committee on Ethics last met on April 8, 2026.

Judge Turner noted that, since the last GCDR meeting, the Ethics Committee reviewed and approved one (1) application for neutral registration.

There are no pending complaints or appeals at this time.

The Ethics Committee will meet next on June 3, 2026.

c. Training and Credentials Committee: Judge Rebecca Crumrine Rieder

The Committee on Training and Credentials last met on March 18 and May 6, 2026.

Judge Crumrine Rieder reported that, during those meetings, the Committee reviewed eight (8) inactive reinstatement requests. Of those requests, six (6) neutrals were required to complete additional continuing education hours and review GUMA training materials; one (1) neutral was offered the option of completing a practicum or observing no fewer than six (6) hours of mediations with a registered General Civil Mediator; and the remaining neutral was permitted to remain in Inactive Status due to documented health issues that prevented compliance with the continuing education requirements.

The Committee also considered four (4) waiver or extension requests. Of those requests, two (2) waivers were approved: one (1) to waive the Domestic Relations Mediation education requirement, and one (1) to waive the 18-month time requirement to apply for registration. The remaining two (2) requests were denied: one (1) seeking to waive the Juvenile Delinquency Mediation and Juvenile Dependency Mediation training requirements, and one (1) asserting a military exemption to waive the registration timing rules.

There are currently no outstanding appeals.

The Committee will meet next on July 22, 2026.

d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray

The Outreach Committee last met on February 12, 2026, prior to the last Commission meeting.

Mr. Gray reported that, at its upcoming meeting, the Committee will continue its focus on developing a repository of model mediation forms. On March 31, GODR met with program directors and requested their assistance in providing sample forms to assist in drafting model mediation guidelines, mediator reports, and mediation agreements. The Committee has received a number of sample forms from programs and greatly appreciates those who have assisted.

On March 17, Ms. Johnson met with court leadership in Rockdale County regarding the county's interest in establishing an ADR program. There appears to be strong support for the initiative, and Ms. Johnson is currently working with court administration on the steps necessary to begin the program development process.

The Waycross Judicial Circuit ADR Program remains in the implementation phase, with a program orientation anticipated in the near future. Mr. Randall Weiland noted that the program is still working through their administrative process and looks forward to meeting with Ms. Johnson when they are ready.

The Committee will meet next on May 21, 2026.

e. Domestic Violence Rules Committee: Ms. Tracy Johnson

Ms. Johnson noted that the Committee does not have anything new to report.

The Committee's next meeting is TBD.

V. Special Committee Report

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

Judge Palmer shared that, since the February meeting, the JHSC Working Group has continued refining the proposed framework for Judicially Hosted Settlement Conferences, with particular focus on the ethical issues identified in prior discussions.

At its March 20 meeting, the Working Group revisited key issues raised during the December 15 meeting with Courtney Veal, Director of the Judicial Qualifications Commission, including disqualification and recusal, confidentiality and ex parte communication, judicial referrals and neutrality, and the intersection of these issues with the Code of Judicial Conduct. Members also discussed the need for specific training regarding cases involving self-represented litigants as well as the appropriate limits of evaluative input. The group considered funding, access, education, and outreach, including the potential role of local court

ADR programs, presentations at judicial conferences, bench guides, reference materials, and outreach to all classes of court.

The group is working to obtain additional guidance from the Supreme Court as the framework continues to develop and is scheduled to reconvene this summer, working toward final recommendations for submission to the full Commission later this year.

The working group will meet next later this summer.

VI. GODR Report: Ms. Karlie Sahs

a. 2025 Data Collection

The 2025 Data Collection deadline for court ADR programs was March 16, 2026. Two (2) programs were granted an extension to April 2 and were able to meet the extension deadline. All programs submitted data, and GODR is happy to report 100% compliance. The data is with the JC/AOC Office of Research and Data Analysis, which will compile information and present findings later this calendar year.

b. Strategic Projects Update

Updates to the strategic projects are as follows:

1. **GODR 2.0:** Following approval by the Judicial Council, two funding requests (ScheduleADR and an additional staff person) were presented to the legislature. The House voted to fund both requests in full while the Senate approved the staffing request and cut the ScheduleADR funding request by half. Following a final vote and the May 12 signature from Governor Kemp, ScheduleADR is partially funded and the new staff position is fully funded for Fiscal Year 2027.
2. **Neutral Registration System:** Late renewal season closed on February 25, and reports were sent to court ADR programs so they may ensure their rosters reflect neutrals in good standing. Staff met separately with the Georgia Courts Registrar (GCR) and upper IT division leadership on April 21. Among other items, discussion included system capability to collect a service fee for credit card transactions within the GCR and ADR Institute registration systems. Learning both systems can implement the function, a follow up meeting was held on May 7 with the other GCR stakeholders to discuss their interest in implementing the service fee. After a positive response, GODR will work with various JC/AOC divisions (Fiscal, Legal, and IT) to map a path for implementing service fee collection.

Ms. Amber Range, who manages the GCR team, advised that GCR continues to push system enhancements for improving usability, security, and data integrity. The system will also be rolling out multi-factor authentication to reduce risk and better align system functionality with operational needs.

3. **ADR Institute:** The 2026 ADR Institute will be held on November 19 at the State Bar of Georgia. The request for proposals (RFP) was sent out, and final sessions will be selected by June 1.

4. **Court Program Evaluations, Expansion of Neutral Services, Juvenile Court ADR Programs, and Program Director Conference:** no updates to report.
5. **Data Collection & Reporting, Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference (JHSC)/Evaluative Processes, & Court Program Support:** updates were provided elsewhere during the meeting.

c. Upcoming Conferences:

1. **National Association for Court Management**
July 12-16; Jacksonville, Florida. Ms. Johnson will attend.
2. **Superior Court Judges Summer Conference**
Ms. Johnson has been invited to present.

VII. Chairman's Report: Judge Markham

Judge Markham remarked that it was a historic legislative session for GODR, as it marks the first time since 2011 that GODR has received state appropriated funding. The funding allows for the hiring of a new Program Coordinator; the hiring process is underway, and a new hire is expected to start on or around July 1. The Commission looks forward to introducing the new coordinator at the August meeting.

Over the next couple of weeks, Commission leadership will be working on committee assignments for the new members (sworn in at the February meeting).

Judge Markham relayed congratulations to Ms. Becki Lew, Cobb County Superior Court ADR Program Director, whose son, Connor Lew, was recently drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals of the National Football League.

The Conasauga Judicial Circuit ADR Program recently received approval for a new mediation center. Chief Judge Cindy Morris expressed her support for the endeavor and provided a brief overview of the project.

VIII. New/Old Business

There was no new or old business to report.

IX. 2026 Commission Dates: August 19 (virtual) and December 9 (in-person)

The Commission's August 19 meeting will be held virtually. The December 9 meeting will be held in person at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center. Meeting dates for 2027 will be announced at the August meeting.

X. Executive Session (Guests are excused)

Chief Judge Morris made motion to move into Executive Session, with Judge Quinn Kasper seconding the motion. All members voted in favor. Judge Markham excused all guests, and the Commission moved into Executive session at approximately 2:25 p.m.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at approximately 2:55 p.m.

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

[Minutes approved via email June 3, 2026]