



# Be Neutral - December 2016

*A publication of the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution*

## A Message from the Executive Director



*Tracy B. Johnson*

For over 20 years, the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution has served the Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution in its mission "to provide for speedy, efficient, and inexpensive resolution of disputes and prosecutions." Today there are 121 of Georgia's 159 counties offering litigants an alternative to traditional litigation.

As a former court program director, I understand the benefits court ADR programs offer to the judicial system and to litigants. I also recognize the value of our neutrals' service, not only to these programs, but also our entire judicial system and community. Our state is very fortunate to have an experienced roster of approved trainers who are dedicated to improving the ADR profession with quality instruction.

It is both an honor and a pleasure to continue the work of the Commission in both supporting established programs and helping to expand the use of dispute resolution in more counties and classes of court. It is equally important to continue our service to our registered neutrals and approved trainers who provide support to our statewide ADR system.

During these first few months on the job, I have spent much of my time visiting local ADR programs across the state and participating in continuing education seminars. This has provided me with a great opportunity to meet many of you, and I look forward to meeting many more in my future travels. I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank our Commission Chair, Judge Charles E. Auslander III, and all of the Commission members for their support and guidance in these first few months. I would also like to extend a special note of thanks to former GODR Director Mr. Shinji Morokuma for making the transition in leadership smooth and effortless. Mr. Morokuma is still active with GODR, and we are fortunate to have him on board.

Starting next year, this office will begin work on our strategic plan which includes objectives to conduct research, analysis, and evaluation; expand access to dispute resolution; and improve education and communication for all stakeholders. This office cannot fulfill these objectives without your collaboration. From the words of Mother Theresa, "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot, together we can do great things." I hope we can count on your participation and contribution now and in the future to do great things.

I look forward to working alongside each of you to make advancements in our state's ADR program. Happy Holidays!

# Happy Holidays



## **NEW! Advisory Opinion 9**

The Georgia Court of Appeals, in *Wright v. Burch*, 331 Ga. App. 839, 771 S.E.2d 490 (2015), issued a decision that has significant impact on the calculation and negotiation of child support arrearages. It is common for mediators to help parties negotiate the amount of arrearage, especially when the exact amount is unknown or difficult to calculate. However, in accordance with this decision, the total arrearage amount must be accurately calculated using the existing child support order and records of payments made and received.



## **2016 Registration Renewal**

Neutrals have until December 31st for on-time registration renewal.

**[Click here for instructions and to renew!](#)**

## **Commission on Dispute Resolution Updates**

New Commission Members

The Supreme Court of Georgia has appointed Judge Amanda H. Mercier, Court of Appeals of Georgia, and Judge Jane C. Barwick, Superior Court of Fulton County, as members to the Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution. At the November 2, 2016, Commission meeting, Chief Justice Hugh Thompson administered the oaths. **[Learn More](#)**



The next meeting is February 1, 2017, at 2:00 p.m. in Room #1 of the State Bar of Georgia. Minutes from Commission meetings can be found **[here](#)**.

## **Did you know?**

Wesleyan College in Macon was the first college in the world chartered to grant degrees to women.

You can obtain CE credits for **FREE** by watching videos posted on the GODR website. **[Learn more](#)**

All advisory and ethics opinions can be viewed on our website by **[clicking here](#)**.



## What we are reading...

**[Ohio State Journal of Dispute Resolution: "Reciprocal Coaching to Reduce the Risk of False Failure in Mediation and Support from Social Science for Coaching Ideas"](#)**

by Judge Wayne Brazil.

**[Success at Mediation: How to Define and Accomplish It](#)** by Ray Chadwick

**[Maryland Research Offers Insight into What Works \(And What Doesn't\) in the Mediation Room](#)**

by Jen Shack

## Calendar of Events

2016 ADR Institute is December 9, 2016

Live - State Bar of Georgia Conference Center; or  
Via Videoconference - South Georgia State Bar Office, Tifton; or  
Via Webstream (NEW!)



*Note: GODR Staff will be available to help with onsite registration renewal*

To sign-up **[Click here.](#)**

More CE Opportunities are listed on our webpage **[Learn More](#)**

**Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution**  
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*"Providing for the Speedy, Efficient, and Inexpensive  
Resolution of Disputes and Prosecutions."*



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