



Be Neutral

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From the Director



Welcome to our fourth issue of *Be Neutral*. We thank all of you who have called and written with words of support and encouragement about our e-newsletter. We hope each issue contains some useful, educational, or interesting information for you and your practice. Your comments and ideas are welcome.

Be Neutral is sent monthly to all registered neutrals, generally at the beginning of the month. If you missed an issue, our back issues are posted at the bottom right of our website, under [Newsletter Archive](#) and can also be accessed from the ARCHIVE button below. Please take a look. If you know people who want *Be Neutral*, please direct them to our subscription box at the bottom right of our [website](#), where they just need to enter their e-mail addresses.

Response to last month's inaugural installment of Case Watch was so high that we've brought you another one this month. This month, attorney and mediator Mary Ellen Cates talks about the hard decisions around "soft" money that divorcing parties have to make in mediation in order to agree on monthly child support payments. Speaking of child support, updated electronic Child Support Calculators are available. Please see the stories below.

Registration renewal season is coming up. This begins the busy time of year when we get a lot of phone calls and e-mails about continuing education, application deadlines, fees, etc. There are only three staff members here. So if we don't answer the phone right away, it's probably because we're already on another line talking with another neutral, or replying to an e-mail. Please leave a message. We try to respond within 24 hours to all phone and e-mail queries.

Some tips that will help us help you at all times: If you are mailing us something important, first make copies and file them, then send the material via a service that provides tracking and delivery confirmation. If you are faxing us something important, keep the fax transmittal confirmation. If you are e-mailing us something important, request a return receipt when your message is delivered or read (many e-mail programs allow this), and save it. Or save our responses to your e-mail.

Georgia State University has been in the news lately for fielding its very first football team. But we're more excited about a new restorative justice clearinghouse created by four GSU entities. Keep reading below for more. (And forgive me while I crow about my alma mater, GSU College of Law, which was just voted the No. 1 best-value law school in the country by [National Jurist magazine](#).)

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Archive



Jobs in Ombuds Offices Available in Atlanta

Help keep the peace on a college campus. The Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) is looking for an [ombudsman for its Atlanta campus](#). And Georgia State University is looking for a [coordinator in the ombuds office](#). While we're talking conflict resolution jobs, www.mediate.com/jobs is a great source for employment opportunities all over the country. And the world – there's a job in the United Kingdom on the list right now. Make it habit to check the job listing regularly.



Case Watch: For Mediators

To include overtime pay or not to include overtime pay. That is the question that litigants, attorneys and mediators frequently face when determining gross monthly income for the purpose of calculating monthly child support amounts. Whether to count "variable income" such as tips, commissions, and overtime pay and to what degree is the source of much hard bargaining and hard feelings in divorce mediations. In this installment of Case Watch, veteran divorce attorney and registered mediator Mary Ellen Cates analyzes a 2009 Georgia Supreme Court case that helps to answer these contentious questions.

[Read Full Article](#)



New Child Support Calculators Available Now

Version 8.3 of the electronic Excel Child Support Calculators was deployed on September 29 for public use. The two electronic calculators were improved to resolve display, spacing and protection issues that had been identified since the release of version 8.2 on March 17. None of the issues identified and resolved in version 8.3 have any impact on the calculations.

The new version fixes three issues: 1) line spacing on the Data Entry Form; 2) protection added to both workbooks to ensure the naming structure of the tabs (i.e., Schedule A) cannot be altered as doing so can corrupt the Worksheet (user would encounter a Microsoft debug error message); and 3) Schedule E deviation description types did not always display correctly on Line 10 of the worksheet.

Please visit the Child Support Commission web site at <http://www.georgiacourts.org/csc/> and download version 8.3 for immediate use. Or go to <https://cscalculator.gaoc.us/>.



Tis the Season: Registration Renewal Starts November 1

The 2010 registration renewal season will be from November 1 to December 31, 2010. All registered neutrals will need to renew, except those new neutrals with a registration expiration date of 1/1/2011. Online renewal access and fillable, downloadable renewal forms will be available on our website on November 1. Please don't send us renewal information yet! Any applications submitted after December 31, 2010 will be considered late. Details:

Continuing Education: All renewing neutrals must show on their renewal applications that they have taken at least 3 hours of continuing education in 2010 (not 2009, 2008, etc.). You can no longer carry over CE hours from previous years or toward future years.

Renewal Fee: The basic renewal fee is \$125; it is \$150 for those registered in domestic relations mediation. Note: if you submit your application after December 31, 2010, your application will be considered late, and your renewal fee will double to \$250 or \$300. We don't want you to have to pay the late fee, so please submit your application before December 31, 2010.

Signature Page: The GBI requires all renewing neutrals to submit a personally signed signature page that gives GODR permission to run a criminal background check. For those submitting printed applications, the signature page is the last page of the renewal form. For those submitting renewals online, you need to print and send us your signed signature page separately. Your application will not be processed without it. Mail, e-mail, or fax your signature page to us.

More Information: See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for information on renewal fees, what counts as neutral CE and how to earn CE.

****Always send important documents to GODR via a service that offers tracking and delivery confirmation.****



New Restorative Justice Clearinghouse at Georgia State University

A new website serves as an information resource and networking hub for those interested in the field of restorative justice. The [Restorative Justice Clearinghouse](#), the first of its kind in the southeast, is a joint project of four institutions at Georgia State University: the [Council for Restorative Justice](#), the [School of Social Work](#), the [Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution](#), and the [College of Law](#). The website features a searchable database of federal and states statutes, case law, programs, people, and publications; links to full-text versions of articles, statutes, and case law; links to practitioner and organization web pages; and a blog where users can discuss and share information.

So what is "restorative justice?" It is a conflict resolution philosophy that focuses on addressing the needs of victims rather than the wrongdoing of offenders. Restorative approaches to justice seek to engage and empower impacted parties – including the offenders, the victims, their families and their communities. The restorative approach to justice is grounded in four questions:

- What harms have been done to whom?
- What are the victims' needs?
- What does it take to repair the harm?
- Who is responsible or obliged to participate in making things right?

Those of you who mediate delinquency cases in juvenile court are already familiar with one form of restorative justice. There, mediation brings together not only the juvenile offender, but the child's parents, and the victim of the juvenile's actions – a merchant from whom the juvenile shoplifted, for example. The mediator helps the juvenile to understand the harm done to the victim and to engage all parties in working out an appropriate form of restitution. But there is so much more to the concept and the field; check out the [Clearinghouse website](#) for more information.

Protect Yourself: Neutrals Are Being Sued More Often



As mediation becomes more popular in the courts and in the private sector, more mediators are finding themselves on the receiving end of a lawsuit. See this [article](#). To protect yourself and your assets, you need professional liability insurance designed specifically for mediators and arbitrators. As a Georgia registered neutral, you can purchase insurance at low group rates and with additional benefits through our exclusive agreement with [Complete Equity Markets](#). See our [website](#) for more information or contact [Betsy Thomas](#) with [Complete Equity Markets](#) at 800-324-6234, ext. 472, and tell her you're a Georgia registered neutral!

Another benefit of being a Georgia-registered neutral is your access to our exclusive insurance and retirement program. Talk to the experts at [BPC Financial](#), who can advise you on your insurance needs and help you find deals on major medical insurance, healthcare savings accounts, dental and vision insurance, retirement accounts and more, check out the [GODR Registered Neutrals Insurance and Retirement Programs website](#).

Keep Saving the Date - 16th Annual ADR Institute

The 16th Annual ADR Institute and 2010 Neutrals' Conference will be held Friday,



December 10, 2010, at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center, 104 Marietta St. NW, Atlanta. Attendance was standing room only last year, and we hope to fill as many seats or more this year. At least 6 hours of neutral continuing education and 6 hours of CLE (including that rare 1 Ethics Hour) will be available. More details and conference registration will be available through www.iclega.org in November. Stay tuned!



Upcoming CE and Training Offerings

Registration renewal season begins November 1. But there's no reason to panic about your annual 3-hour neutral CE requirement. Remember, any training you took in 2010 counts as CE. Lawyers, any CLE you took in 2010 counts as CE. Likewise, judges, any CJE you took in 2010 counts as CE. Accountants and other professionals with continuing education requirements, same thing. And any ADR-related seminar or training you attended in 2010 just because you wanted to learn something, yes, that counts as CE also. Check frequently at our [website](http://www.godr.org) for the latest CE and training offerings.



We Need Your Help

Neutrals and friends, GODR needs your help to update the "[ADR Links](#)" section in the main menu of our website. We update those links when we're notified of changes. But frankly, we haven't had the resources to test if all of those links are current. The section is split into five subsections: "ADR Organizations," "Academic and Education Links," "ADR Journals/Publications," "Court-Connected ADR Links Outside Georgia," and "More ADR Resources." Please send us any updates to the information – changed name of entity, new web address, new entity, etc., at gaodr@godr.org. Thank you for helping us be a better resource for you.

Spread the Word

Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might be interested in ADR in Georgia courts. Forward it just as you would any other e-mail. If folks who are not registered neutrals want to receive the newsletter free of charge, they can use the subscription link at the bottom of this newsletter or submit their e-mail addresses in the subscription box at the bottom right of the home page of our [website](http://www.godr.org). And sending us feedback is easy – just reply to this e-mail as you would any other e-mail. We want to hear from you !



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