

# Got Conflict?

Conflict hurts. Mediation helps.



AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE CONFLICT MEDIATION SERVICES SINCE 1979

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Pedro

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September 2023

Hi friends,

I am beyond excited to be starting as CDSC's new Executive Director, although Gail Packer leaves big shoes to fill and she will be dearly missed at CDSC.

Gail has built this incredible organization into a staple of the local community and has left an indelible mark in the many lives that CDSC has impacted in the last 35 years. I am looking forward to relying on her sage advice in this time of transition—we know that she will remain close to CDSC and we are wishing her the best in her well-deserved retirement!

I am coming into this role after nearly a decade in legal aid that has taught me that there is no limit to what our colleagues, clients, and community of supporters at large can achieve. I began my career as a legal aid lawyer for low-income veterans in Massachusetts across different civil legal aid issue areas, including in housing and family court. More recently, I was a Senior Staff Attorney at the American Bar Association, taking on asylum cases. For the past few years, I have also been teaching as a Lecturer on Law in the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, where I was previously President of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau.



In all my past work, I've learned that taking the time to hear people's stories is crucial to helping them reach a positive resolution and I am looking forward to hearing and sharing more stories with you as we begin our work together and continue the crucial work of CDSC.

I am thrilled to be back home in the Boston area where I am originally from and where I became a legal aid lawyer and mediator. We have a great deal of work ahead, and I am excited to get to know all of you in the weeks and months to come!

Onward,

Pedro  
Executive Director

## 2023 BASH: celebrate & support our new Director

It's that time of year again! On October 26 from 5:30 to 6:30 CDSC will be hosting our annual BASH to get the vital funds we need to serve our community. This virtual event will be professionally produced and is a chance for our volunteers, staff, sponsors, and board members to come together and celebrate all the great work that we've done together, as well as to meet our new Executive Director. There are still [tickets available](#), so please join us for the event!

At the BASH, we will be presenting the Community Peacemaker Award to a group of honorees who have done incredible work with us over the past year: the wonderful peer mediation team at the Acera: The Massachusetts School of Science and Creativity.

In years past, this event has been an opportunity for networking and community-building within CDSC. We are proud to have continued this tradition through the pandemic, and hope that you will join us once again this year. All of us at CDSC are really looking forward to this event, which has been made possible by our sponsors, including Eric and Shirley Paley and many other generous donors. If you would like to become a sponsor, [visit our website](#) to learn more about the different ways you can give.



## CDSC and the Huntington – a new partnership!

CDSC is thrilled to partner with the Huntington Community Membership

Initiative, a program designed to reduce the cost barrier of attending live theater for those with limited income and to diversify the audiences so they look more like the city of Boston. Thanks to this partnership, *every CDSC volunteer can use our membership* to purchase tickets to any available seat at any performance without restriction for just \$20. On top of this, *our community membership covers the Speakeasy and Lyric Stage theaters too!*

The Huntington is Boston's leading professional theater and one of the region's premier cultural assets. Since its founding in 1982, The Huntington has received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, played to a cumulative audience of 3.5 million, presented over 200 plays (18 of which went on to Broadway or Off Broadway), and served over 500,000 students, community members, and other cultural organizations!

CDSC's volunteers are essential to our mission to serve poor and underserved people in the greater Boston and Cambridge communities. We're so pleased to be able to offer this benefit to them, and are proud that The Huntington has partnered with us! *If you are a CDSC volunteer and need our community code, please contact Sue Marsh at [smarsh@communitydispute.org](mailto:smarsh@communitydispute.org). Interested in becoming a volunteer? We need you! Contact [cdscinfo@communitydispute.org](mailto:cdscinfo@communitydispute.org) for more information.*

## CDSC Roundtables: Offering Lifelong Learning



JJ Durham



David Larson



Vanessa Linsey

We are excited to announce that we have three roundtables planned for fall 2023. These virtual lunchtime presentations offer the chance to hear from experts on mediation-related topics.

For our September roundtable, we will hear from Janice (JJ) Durham, founding

For our September roundtable, we will hear from Janice (JJ) Durham, founding partner of [Pathways to Restorative Communities](#), and former Executive Director of the Prevention Center. JJ will share about the importance of listening in mediation and facilitation on September 21, 2023 at 12:00pm.

In October, Vanessa Linsey will present on Mediation and Mindfulness. Vanessa is a divorce mediator and graduate of the University of Massachusetts' Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Practicum. She also co-founded Chrysalis Meditation Center in Winchester. She will speak with roundtable attendees on October 19th at noon.

On December 7, 2023 at 12:00pm Professor David Larson, a Professor of Law at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law and Senior Fellow at the Dispute Resolution Institute will present a roundtable on AI and Mediation.

Please [contact us](#) to be added to the attendance list for any of our roundtables, or to be added to our mailing list. Follow us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#) to be among the first to hear about our roundtables and trainings!

## Basic Mediation Training is Coming Up!

In October we will once again offer our Basic Mediation Training to take virtually, from the comfort of your home or office. We welcome anyone who would like to get started with learning about mediation through presentations, discussion and roleplays to join our class on Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 5 p.m. Class will be capped at 20 people, and a limited number of scholarships are available. For more information about the content of the class, [visit our website](#), and to register [visit this page](#). Basic Mediation Training is the crucial first step to volunteering with CDSC, or to incorporating mediation into your professional skills. Sign up now, or spread the word to anyone who will benefit from this course!

## The Importance of Pronouns in Mediation

One of the most crucial aspects of a successful mediation is respect. Without mutual respect, it will be impossible for mediators and clients to have an open and productive conversation. Respecting your clients means referring to



them in a way that is appropriate, which includes using the correct name and pronouns. The American Bar Association stresses the importance of using the correct pronouns during mediation. This applies to everyone, regardless of whether they identify as a part of the LGBTQ+ community.



So, as a mediator, how can you incorporate this advice into your mediations? It's easy! At the beginning of the mediation, introduce yourself and state your pronouns. For example, you could say, "Hello, my name is John, and my pronouns are he/him." This sets a precedent that your clients will likely follow when they introduce themselves. If someone chooses not to state their pronouns, don't press them, just continue as you normally would. If someone provides their pronouns, throughout the mediation, make sure that you use the correct pronouns and name to refer to all parties.

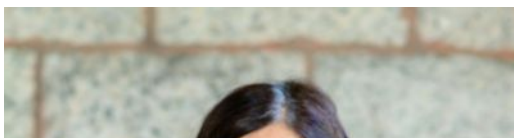
What happens if you mess up? Don't panic. If you accidentally use the wrong pronouns for someone, the best thing to do is correct yourself and move on. You can say something like, "I'm sorry, I meant to say she," and then continue on with the mediation. Don't center your embarrassment by over-apologizing for the mistake. If you are struggling to remember someone's pronouns, try practicing in your head. Say five sentences to yourself about that person, using the correct pronouns. You can do this exercise as many times as you need to, and soon it should come naturally.

Using the correct pronouns is not only respectful, but necessary for building mutual trust and understanding with your clients. For more information, visit the [ABA's Toolbox for Mediation with LGBTQIA+ Litigants](#).

In other new staffing news, we welcomed Monique Pinto as our fall intern last week, and will welcome Sama Shah as our intern for the academic year starting next week. Monique is a third year law student and Cambridge native who speaks four languages and wants to use her internship at CDSC to combine her legal education, linguistic abilities and strong sense of community to make a difference. Sama is studying for her Master of Theological Studies and will focus on curriculum development and mediation outreach to faith-based groups.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Halee Burg

"Mediation has changed me," says Halee Burg





Mediation has changed me, says Halee Berg. “How I view the world and relationships. It’s made me a more effective and better problem solver. It has helped me see conflict differently.”

Halee Berg had already lived two full careers before becoming a mediator in her own practice, and as a volunteer for CDSC. After graduating from UC Berkeley, she spent years working as a litigator in San Francisco. Moving to Boston, she joined Northeastern University as an assistant Provost. She was part of the team that helped

Northeastern go from a commuter school to one of the most selective universities in the US. After 20 years there, she transitioned to what she describes as the “least adversarial” of conflict resolution – mediation.

In her practice with the Elder Decisions Team of Agreement Resources, Halee helps families to understand one another better. She’s gratified by the level of challenge involved, and that every moment of every case is different. Her volunteer work with CDSC enables to give back to an organization she loves.

“I’ve worked with all sorts of mediation centers and CDSC is right at the top. Very welcoming – Gail is the kindest person and always astute in thinking through issues,” Halee notes.

“The cases that I remember are the mediation cases – the chance to hear the stories, the things that happen to people – there is so much behind the disputes.”

Established in 1979, the Community Dispute Settlement Center (CDSC), is a private, not-for-profit mediation and training center dedicated to providing an alternative and affordable forum for resolving conflict.

CDSC promotes better ways to understand and deal with conflict through skilled teams of pro bono mediators, training programs in mediation and conflict management, and broad community outreach.

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