



## Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution Meeting

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

State Bar of Georgia, Room #1

### AGENDA

- I. Welcome: Chief Judge M. Cindy Morris
- II. Roll call
- III. Meeting Minutes from February 12, 2025: *Approved via email*
- IV. Standing Committee Reports:
  - a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Carrie B. Markham
  - b. Ethics Committee: Chief Judge Renata Turner
  - c. Training and Credentials Committee: Hon. Rebecca Crumrine Rieder
  - d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray
  - e. DV Rules Committee: Ms. Peggy Wilson
- V. Special Committee Report:
  - a. Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer
- VI. GODR Report: Ms. Tracy Johnson & Ms. Karlie Sahs
  - a. Program Director's Conference Recap
  - b. Probate Mediation Implementation Plan Updates
    1. 2025 Council of Probate Court Judges Spring Conference
    2. Probate Court Mediation Handbook
  - c. Strategic Projects update
  - d. Upcoming conferences:
    1. Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, May 27-31, New Orleans
    2. Judicial Conferences
- VII. New Business
- VIII. Chairman's Report: Chief Judge Morris
- IX. Old Business
- X. 2025 Commission Dates: August 20 (*virtual*); December 10 (*in person*)
- XI. Adjournment

**\*Please email [godr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:godr@georgiacourts.gov) by 5 p.m. on May 13, 2025, to receive the Zoom link for viewing.**



# Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

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Chair M. Cindy Morris called the meeting to order. In addition to Chief Judge Morris, Commission members and Office staff present were:

Chair-Elect Carrie B. Markham; N. Staten Bitting Jr., Esq.; The Hon. Rebecca Crumrine Rieder; Presiding Judge Sara L. Doyle; Hal Gray III, Esq.; Nicole W. Hull, Esq.; Judge Quinn Kasper; Judge Pandora E. Palmer; Senior Judge Jack Partain; 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 Carole Griffith, Staff Attorney and Kristy King, I.T. Program Manager. Stephanie Hines, Judicial Services Division Director observed by video.

The following guests observed by video: Vanessa Billings, Eastern Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Tiffany Bradshaw, Southern Judicial Circuit; Rita Carroll, Carroll County ADR Program; Abby Carter, Gwinnett Courts ADR Program; Lakesiya Cofield, Fulton County ADR Program; Melissa Hughes, Tifton Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Linda Jezerinac, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit ADR Program; Rebecca Lew, Cobb County Superior Court ADR Program; Valerie Lyle, 9<sup>th</sup> JAD ADR Program; Jody Overcash, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit ADR Program; and Shannon Watts, Southern Judicial Circuit ADR Program.

## **I. Welcome**

Chief Judge Morris called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

## **II. Roll Call of GCDR Members**

Chief Judge Morris asked Ms. Karlie Sahs to conduct a roll call of all GCDR members.

## **III. Meeting Minutes from February 12, 2025: *Approved via email***

The minutes of the February Commission meeting were approved prior to the meeting via e-mail vote on March 28, 2025.

## **IV. Standing Committee Reports:**

### **a. Budget and Personnel Committee: Judge Carrie B. Markham**

The Committee met on April 22, 2025, and approved a proposed FY2026 budget, which has now been adopted by the Commission.

Budget documents for the current fiscal year (FY25) were included in the meeting materials. Judge Markham advised that, as of March 2025, total year-to-date revenue and expenditures have both grown compared to the same period last year, reflecting continued program expansion and increased activity levels. Overall, financials remain on track, with revenues modestly exceeding expenditures. Specifically, expenditures remain consistent with expectations for this point in the fiscal year, representing roughly three quarters of the annual allocation. Judge Markham further noted that the special projects budget continues to support key initiatives, with FY25 activities such as onboarding additional court ADR programs to ScheduleADR, planned travel, and office space improvements. The overall fund balance has decreased slightly from the prior fiscal year, reflecting continued strategic use of resources in alignment with overall programming goals and long-term investments. No additional expenditures are expected for the ADR Institute fund for the remainder of the fiscal year.

No further budgetary issues or personnel matters were noted.

**b. Ethics Committee: Chief Judge Renata D. Turner**

The Committee on Ethics last met on February 19, 2025.

Judge Turner reported that since the last Commission meeting, one (1) complaint has been dismissed, and one (1) complaint was administratively dismissed by staff. There is one (1) outstanding complaint being prepared for Committee review.

There are no outstanding applications for review or pending appeals at this time.

The Ethics Committee will meet next on June 18, 2025.

**c. Training and Credentials Committee: Hon. Rebecca Crumrine Rieder**

The Committee on Training and Credentials last met on March 11 and May 6, 2025.

Hon. Crumrine Rieder reported that the Committee evaluated four (4) Inactive status reinstatement requests; the neutrals were required to pay the reinstatement fee, complete additional training to satisfy their continuing education courses, review Georgia Uniform Mediation Act (GUMA) continuing education materials, or a combination of these options.

The Committee also reviewed a request to waive the training requirements for General Civil Mediation training. This request was submitted by a longtime attorney/part-time judge who took the training in 1996 and did not maintain his registration. The individual sought to have the training requirement waived to allow him to mediate as he nears retirement. The Committee granted his request, as the applicant's experience was enough to replace the training he would receive through the training course, and he expressed a desire to complete the Probate Mediation Training. He will be required to complete future training for any other category for which he seeks registration.

There are no outstanding appeals.

During Executive Session, the Committee was delegated by the Commission to review the feasibility of streamlining Domestic Relations Mediation training for retired Superior Court judges. The Committee will have an initial discussion of this matter at its next meeting.

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2025.

**d. Outreach Committee: Mr. Hal Gray**

The Outreach Committee has not met since the last GCDR meeting.

Mr. Gray shared that GODR staff gathered valuable information on program outreach during the February Program Directors' Conference. This input will help shape future committee efforts to support and strengthen communication and engagement across programs. The Committee's next meeting will focus on identifying opportunities for continued outreach and planning.

Mr. Gray mentioned that the Committee will revisit expanding ADR into Rockdale County. Additionally, Mr. Weiland, a Committee member, shared that the Waycross Judicial Circuit has reached out to inquire as to how they can initiate steps to start an ADR program. Written guidance as well as the full Court ADR Program Handbook were provided via Mr. Weiland, who now serves as the District One Court Administrator (Waycross Judicial Circuit is within this district).

The committee's next meeting is set for June 23, 2025.

**e. Domestic Violence Rules Committee: Ms. Peggy McCoy Wilson**

The Committee last met on May 15, 2023.

On behalf of Ms. Wilson, Ms. Johnson shared that, since the February GCDR meeting, GODR staff have engaged with program directors during the Program Directors' Conference to discuss the Domestic Violence (DV) Rules. The feedback received during these conversations was valuable and will help inform the DV Rules Committee's ongoing comprehensive review of the DV Rules in 2025.

Building on this initial outreach, the Committee will now seek opportunities to engage with additional stakeholders—including mediators, attorneys, and judges—to gather further input. The DV Rules Committee's annual meeting will be used to plan and coordinate these next steps.

The Committee looks forward to sharing further insights from these activities at upcoming meetings as part of the Commission's commitment to ensuring the DV Rules remain effective and responsive to the needs of the community.

The Committee will meet sometime in fall 2025 (TBD).

**V. Special Committee Report:**

**a. Judicial Hosted Settlement Conference Working Group: Judge Pandora Palmer**

The working group's first meeting was held on May 8, 2025.

The working group is co-chaired by the Honorable Rebecca Crumrine Rieder and is tasked with reviewing current practices, evaluating the feasibility of establishing JHSC as a recognized neutral registration category under Georgia's ADR Rules, and ultimately making recommendations to the Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution (GCDR).

Judge Palmer stated that the initial working group meeting intended to begin the process of developing a formalized Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference (JHSC) framework. Of the 20 working group members invited, 17 attended the meeting. Initial discussions centered on varied approaches currently in use, the value of judicial discretion, and the need for a process that balances consistency with flexibility. There was broad support for structured training, with consideration for integrating it into existing judicial education and accounting for prior experience.

Subcommittees are being formed to explore key issues in training, qualifications, and ethics. A collaborative document-sharing system has been implemented to collect resources and forms currently in use.

The working group will meet next on June 13, 2025.

## **VI. GODR Report: Ms. Tracy Johnson & Ms. Karlie Sahs**

### **a. Program Directors' Conference Recap**

GODR held the 2025 Program Director Conference February 26-28 in Savannah. In total, 23 program directors/staff were present along with 7 GCDR members and 4 GODR/AOC staff. Topics covered included data collection, review of the DV Rules, and program evaluations. Feedback from both program representatives and GCDR members was overwhelmingly positive.

### **b. Probate Mediation Implementation Plan Updates**

#### **1. 2025 Council of Probate Court Judges Spring Conference**

Judge Markham and Ms. Johnson presented a session at the Council of Probate Court Judges (CPCJ) Spring Conference on April 17 in Athens.

#### **2. Probate Court Mediation Handbook**

A copy of the Probate Court Mediation Handbook was sent to Kevin Holder, CPCJ Executive Director, to distribute to Probate Court judges and solicit feedback. The judges were asked to submit feedback by Friday, May 16, 2025.

Ms. Johnson noted that, while a continuously updated electronic version of the Handbook will be maintained and available to courts, GODR may ask

for funding for an initial print-run of a hard copy; GODR will explore whether this is a need.

### c. Strategic Projects & Events Update

During Executive Session, the Commission approved an updated Strategic Projects List, which with a re-prioritization of projects aimed at the efficient utilization of staff resources.

1. **GODR 2.0:** Requested appropriations were not approved as part of the state FY2026 budget. Alternate strategies for funding are being explored.
2. **Data Collection & Reporting:** Data from calendar years 2023 & 2024 are currently under review. GODR is working with the AOC IT division on methods for data reporting from court ADR programs not utilizing ScheduleADR. Enhanced reporting of collected data is also being researched.
3. **Neutral Registration System:** The AOC IT division continues to make modifications to increase the overall functionality of the Georgia Courts Registrar (GCR) system, including reporting. Staff is utilizing a ticketing system for user interfacing, allowing for better tracking of user needs. The division is also researching the feasibility of transitioning the GCR a module within the statewide case management system. Ms. Sahs has been working more closely with Ms. Amber Range, the Court Tools Manager overseeing the GCR, to begin process mapping. This will allow for better identification for areas of system enhancement and the creation of more efficient processing flows for staff.
4. **Court Program Support:** GODR has scheduled ScheduleADR onboarding for the following court ADR programs: Cobb Judicial Circuit Superior Court, Gwinnett Judicial Circuit, and Piedmont Judicial Circuit.
5. **Court Program Evaluations:** This has been separated from *Court Program Support* and established as its own project, as it will require substantial time and resources. A proposed start for this project has been postponed to 2026.
6. **ADR Institute:** The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual ADR Institute will be held on Wednesday, November 19, 2025. The agenda for this event has been finalized and will become available soon.
7. **Judicially Hosted Settlement Conferences (JHSC)/Evaluative Processes and Program Director Conference:** discussed previously during the meeting. **Expansion of Neutral Services and Juvenile Court ADR Programs:** No new updates to report.

### d. Upcoming Conferences

1. **Association of Family and Conciliation Courts: May 27-31**  
New Orleans, LA; Ms. Johnson will attend

2. **Judicial Conferences**

GODR will have a presence at various judicial conferences moving forward; Ms. Johnson and/or Ms. Sahs will staff an information table

3. **Institute of Continuing Judicial Education (ICJE)**

GODR will present a 4-hour CJE event virtually on June 3. Individual sessions will be presented by Ms. Johnson, Ms. Griffith, Raye Rawls, Judge Quinn Kasper, and Ms. Sahs.

**VII. Chairman's Report: Chief Judge Morris**

Chief Judge Morris shared the following recent accomplishments:

1. Presentation of the Mercer University School of Law 2025 Meritorious Service Award to Presiding Judge Sara Doyle
2. Justice Center of Atlanta (Executive Director Melissa Heard) received the JAMS Foundation 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Warren Knight Distinguished Service Award, presented at the American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Conference in Chicago on April 15
3. Carole Griffith attended the 151<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Derby on Saturday, May 3.

Additionally, Judge Morris showed support for the Statewide Case Management System. Ms. Kristy King was asked to give a brief update on the project. Judge Morris noted the project will increase accuracy and efficiency within courts, subsequently increasing the public's trust and confidence. Weekly informational roundtables are held by the AOC IT division, and updates are regularly posted to the Judicial Portal at <https://georgiacourts.gov/>.

**VIII. Old Business**

There was no old business to report.

**IX. 2025 Commission Dates: August 20: December 10**

The next meeting is scheduled for August 20, at 2:00 p.m. and will be held virtually. The remaining 2025 meeting will be held in-person on December 10 in Dalton (specific location TBD).

**X. Adjournment**

The meeting concluded at approximately 2:48 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by Karlie A. Sahs and Tracy B. Johnson]  
[Minutes approved via email June 6, 2025]



*Mercer Law School Alumni Association Board of Directors President Tanya Jeffords, '01; the Hon. Samuel D. Ozburn, '76; the Hon. Sara L. Doyle, '94; and Dean Karen J. Sneddon. Photo by Jamie Tucker.*



*Melissa Heard, Executive Director, Justice Center of Atlanta and David Brandon, JAMS Foundation*