



## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Since its founding in 1982, Community Mediation Center *dba FairField Center* has been committed to the principle that, when individuals and groups improve their ability to listen, understand, and communicate effectively and fairly, then everyone in the community benefits. To be effective in our mission, we understand that we must proactively train, employ, and work with people who are likely to have experienced unfair treatment and denials of services which propagate unjust outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

Conflict is inevitable. It is difficult for each and every one of us to disentangle the emotional and practical issues involved in a conflict in order to sustainably move past it. However, there are subtle systems of power and disenfranchisement ingrained in our society that make alternate paths to conflict resolution more difficult to access for some groups than for others. When alternative conflict resolution options are not readily available, then the official systems of authority preside over the parties in conflict, and unfortunately the resolutions offered through those processes (commonly judicial and law enforcement based) often exacerbate existing inequities. In our core service area, we find that the perennial challenges to just and equitable conflict resolution are often due to language barriers, resource constraints, and culturally-based preconceptions.

Our clientele mirrors the population of our service area, which includes a significant proportion of non-native English speakers and of those living with limited assets and constrained incomes. The majority of our mediation services are offered free of charge to our clients through a contract with the Supreme Court of Virginia. This allows us to mediate difficult family conversations in partnership with, but outside of, the court system, which in turn allows families to make decisions about their own lives in a way that respects their values, encourages self-determination, and minimizes the impact of traditional power brokers in their decision making.





While invaluable to our service capacity, the reimbursement fees provided to the center through our court contract do not cover the full costs of providing services to our community's ALICE population. Where those fees fall short, we continue to provide conflict resolution services pro bono.

We value the diverse life experiences that each individual brings to a conversation, a conflict, and to our working environment. And we believe that honest, respectful dialogue amongst those who disagree is key to the just resolution of conflict that is at the heart of our mission. We strive to ensure that our services are open to all - regardless of socioeconomic status, religious or other personal beliefs, identity group, language(s) spoken, disability, (etc) - and we work to ensure that our fee structures and funding sources allow for us to continue serving the ALICE population in our area while also improving the language and cultural diversity within our mediator and facilitator networks.

