RECOMMENDED STANDARDS

FOR SCHOOL-BASED

PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMS

The Association for Conflict Resolution

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RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL-BASED PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMS

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The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) is a professional organization dedicated to enhancing the practice and public understanding of conflict resolution. ACR represents and serves a diverse national and international audience that includes more than 5,000 mediators, arbitrators, facilitators, educators, and others involved in the field of conflict resolution and collaborative decision-making. ACR was launched in January 2001, when the Academy of Family Mediators (AFM), the Conflict Resolution Education Network (CREnet), and the Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) merged into one organization.

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Peer Mediation Standards Committee:

Leigh Jones-Bamman, Committee Chair
The Governor's Prevention Partnership, Hartford, CT

Marsha S. Blakeway, ACR Education Section Chair
National Peace Foundation, Washington, DC

Marge Bleiweis,
Safe and Drug Free Youth Section, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, VA

Gina L. Buckley
Oakland Mediation Center, Bloomfield Hills, MI

Priscilla Prutzman
Creative Response to Conflict, Nyack, NY

Melinda Rivas
Langston Hughes Middle School, Reston, VA

Antonio Sanford
Winning Against Violent Environments (WAVE), Cleveland, OH

Jill Smith
Center for Peace Education, Cincinnati, OH

Madeleine G. Trichel,
Interfaith Center for Peace, Columbus, OH

Dr. Robert T. Whipple
Graduate Program in Negotiation, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding,
California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA

Sharon Press, Ex-Officio Member
Florida Dispute Resolution Center, Tallahassee, FL

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Peer mediation can be a successful approach to managing interpersonal conflict in elementary and secondary schools. These programs provide a unique opportunity for diverse students to use communication, human relations, and problem-solving skills in real-life settings. Effective programs can help to create a safe and welcoming school environment, improve interpersonal and inter-group relations, and assist in reducing school conflicts and violence, especially when part of a comprehensive violence prevention plan. The qualities that mark an effective peer mediation program include youth empowerment, capable adult supervision, cultural competence, diversity, responsiveness to the specific needs of the population it serves, fair resolutions to mediated conflicts, and measurable outcomes.

In 1996, the Standards Committee of the National Association for Mediation in Education (a forerunner of ACR) published "Recommended Standards for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs." This responded to the growing number of peer mediation programs in schools and the need for leadership from experts in order to ensure quality.

Ten years later, to reflect developments in the field and current research, the Education Section of the Association for Conflict Resolution convened the Peer Mediation Standards Committee to update and significantly expand the original version in order to create more rigorous standards. The Peer Mediation Standards Committee drew upon diverse practitioner knowledge and relevant research to provide comprehensive standards for school-based peer mediation programs. The updated "Recommended Standards for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs" set forth the components necessary to develop and sustain an effective peer mediation program.

ACR is committed to diversity and equity in its membership, structure, and organizational work, and this document strives to mirror that commitment. A culturally diverse peer mediation program is one that recognizes, supports, values, and utilizes people's differences and similarities in support of the program's goals and objectives. Diversity and equity mean recognizing and working to eliminate injustices in access, process, and consequences of the program's efforts to strive to meet the needs of diverse students.

These standards are designed to enhance quality and stimulate thought among youth and adult participants in peer mediation programs. This document is designed to be helpful in

- Designing and implementing programs
- Designing evaluation
- Developing and selecting curricula
- Ensuring that programs are welcoming and accessible to all
- Funding programs
- Improving established programs
- Promoting programs
- Providing professional development
- Setting guidelines for research

This document is designed to establish model standards for peer mediator conduct and recommended standards for training (including professional development for adults), program evaluation, and program development & management. This document is not intended to provide instructions on how to set up and manage a peer mediation program; such information is already provided in a number of manuals and other materials with that purpose in mind. While the primary focus of this document is K-12 school-based peer mediation programs, it can be adapted easily for use in other settings, such as community-based youth programs, before and after-school programs, youth residential settings, etc.

SECTION II: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Conflict resolution – the process by which people resolve a dispute or a conflict so that their interests are adequately addressed and they are satisfied with the outcome.

Conflict resolution education – educational practices that model and teach, in culturally meaningful ways, a variety of processes, practices and skills that help address individual, interpersonal and institutional conflicts, and create safe and welcoming communities.

Facilitation – a process in which an impartial third-party manages the design and structure of multi-party collaborative events and meetings in order to enable participants to focus on substantive issues and goals.

Institutional disputes – conflicts that arise because of the rules, policies or norms of an institution

Mediation - a process in which an impartial third party facilitates communication and negotiation and promotes voluntary decision-making by the parties to the dispute.

Negotiation – a process involving at least two people where ideas and possible solutions are explored and discussed to form a mutual agreement to a problem or conflict.

Peer mediation – a process in which students who have been trained in mediation skills and processes mediate the conflicts of other students.

Peer mediation program – an elementary or secondary school program that trains and supports student mediators to offer mediation as an option for resolving conflicts within the school community.

Peer mediator – an elementary or secondary student who has been trained in mediation and has the competence to facilitate the resolution of disputes between student peers using a mediation process.

Program Coordinator(s) - A person (or team) who has been trained according to this document and who coordinates the daily operations of a peer mediation program.

Standard – a principle that implies a model or pattern for guidance; the ideal by which the quality of something may be evaluated.

SECTION III: MODEL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR PEER MEDIATORS

Peer mediators are responsible for following the Model Standards Of Conduct in order to maintain the integrity of mediation. They must conduct themselves in a way that instills confidence in the mediation process and the competence of mediators.

These model standards of conduct for Peer Mediators serve three primary goals:

1. To guide the conduct of peer mediators;
2. To provide information to parties in a dispute; and
3. To promote confidence in peer mediation as a process for handling disputes.

Mediation is a process in which an impartial third party facilitates communication and negotiation and promotes voluntary decision-making by the parties to the dispute.

These standards of conduct are to be read and considered as a single document. There is no significance to the order in which the standards appear. The use of the term "mediator" is meant to imply a co-mediator model.

Some of the matters covered by these standards may be affected by school regulations, policies and procedures that may create conflicts with, and may supersede these standards. A mediator is still required to make every effort to comply with the spirit and intent of these standards.

Note: Adults (not including students who are 18 or older) who mediate in school settings should adhere to the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators (created by the Joint Committee of the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution, American Arbitration Association and the Association for Conflict Resolution) found at http://www.acrnet.org/about/initiatives/QualityAssurance/JCMSCM.htm or other applicable mediation ethical standards. The Model Standards of Conduct for Peer Mediators is consistent in format and general philosophy with the adult Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators, but it has been adapted for peer mediators.

I. Self – Determination

A. A mediator is required to conduct a mediation based on the principle of self-determination of the disputants. Self-determination means the disputants participate voluntarily and make voluntary choices for themselves in mediation without pressure from administrators, mediators or others. A mediator should not interfere with party self-determination for any reason, including getting the parties to reach agreement.

II. Impartiality

A. A mediator is required to mediate in an impartial manner. Impartiality means freedom from favoritism, bias or prejudice.

B. A mediator should agree to mediate only if he or she can mediate in an impartial manner**.** The mediator should avoid doing anything in preparation for a mediation or while conducting a mediation that gives the appearance of taking a side or showing favor to one of the disputants, including action based on the disputants' personal characteristics, background, values, beliefs or the way they act during the mediation.

C. If at any time the mediator is unable to conduct a mediation in an impartial manner, the mediator must withdraw.

III. Conflicts of Interest

A. A mediator is required to avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest occur when a mediator has a personal connection with a disputant or the conflict that causes an impression of partiality.

1. Before agreeing to mediate, a mediator is required to tell the program coordinator about any past, present or possible future relationship or connection the mediator may have with any of the disputants or the conflict. Some connections are so close that the mediator cannot mediate impartially, and the mediator should decline the mediation. Recognizing that there may be different situations or cultural expectations in which a relationship is not seen as a conflict of interest, the mediator may mediate if the disputants agree.

2. If the mediator is not aware of the relationship or connection until after the mediation has already started, the mediator should tell the coordinator and the disputants as soon as the mediator becomes aware of the connection. The mediation may proceed if all of the disputants agree and if the integrity of the mediation will not be compromised.

IV. Competence

A. Mediators must possess the skills and knowledge to be a competent mediator and mediators shall refuse to mediate if they believe it would require skill or knowledge that exceeds their expertise. Mediator competence can be acquired and enhanced through training, cultural understanding, mediation skills and experience.

B. If a mediator realizes during mediation that she or he does not have the skills required to mediate the case, the mediator should let the coordinator know so that steps can be taken to provide assistance to the mediator or bring in a new mediator.

C. Mediators should separate their role as a mediator from any other student leadership role (e.g. peer helper, peer counselor, hall monitor).

V. Confidentiality

A. A mediator must keep confidential everything said, done and written during the mediation, unless it is an exception to confidentiality (such as criminal behavior, abuse or threats of abuse), required by school/mediation policy, or agreed to by the disputants.

1. A mediator should not tell school administrators or other referring parties what was said or done in mediation, but they may report whether the disputants came to mediation and whether they reached an agreement.

2. If an exception to confidentiality arises during a mediation, the mediator must take appropriate steps, including reporting it to the coordinator and, if necessary postponing or ending the mediation.

3. If the parties agree, the mediator may disclose information obtained during the mediation or the written agreement.

4. A mediator may discuss with the coordinator and other mediators what happened during the mediation for training and debriefing so long as the mediator respects the disputants' privacy and preserves the confidentiality of the mediation as much as possible.

B. The mediator is required to explain confidentiality and any required exceptions to confidentiality to the disputants at the beginning of the mediation, including that the mediators may consult and debrief with the coordinator as needed and that the coordinator is bound by the confidentiality.

C. A mediator who meets in private session with any disputant during mediation, must not disclose directly or indirectly information to any other disputant without the agreement of the first disputant.

VI. Quality of the Process

A. A mediator must conduct mediation fairly, respectfully and in a timely manner consistent with these standards. The mediator will ensure that all

disputants have the opportunity to speak, to be heard, and to propose, evaluate, reject or accept potential solutions to their conflict.

B. If a mediator believes that the actions of a disputant make it impossible to conduct a mediation consistent with these standards, the mediator should postpone, withdraw from or end the mediation.

C. A mediator should encourage honesty among all disputants and the mediators.

D. A disputant may have difficulty understanding the dispute, the process of mediation or agreement options, or may have difficulty participating in the mediation. In this case the mediator should consult with the co-mediator and/or program coordinator to determine if something different can be done to help the disputant or if the mediation should be ended.

VII. Advertising and Promotion

A. A mediator must be truthful in advertising and promoting the mediation program. A mediator should not make any promises as to specific results of mediation.

B. A mediator shall keep information about the disputants confidential and not use it in advertising the program without getting required permission.

VIII. Advancement of Mediation Practice

A. A mediator should demonstrate respect for differing points of view within the field of mediation, seek to learn from other mediators and work with other mediators to better serve people in conflict.

B. A mediator shall act in a way that advances the practice of mediation. A mediator promotes this standard by engaging in the following:

1. Fostering diversity within the school-based mediation program.

2. Assisting newer mediators through training and mentoring.

3. Networking or meeting with fellow mediators.

SECTION IV:
RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
FOR SCHOOL-BASED PEER MEDIATION
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

A peer mediation program may be implemented in a single school or as part of a district-wide initiative. Creating, managing, enhancing and sustaining a program involve the following components.

Needs Assessment and Program Design

- Assess the need for a peer mediation program to help resolve disputes in a school from the perspectives of administrators, staff, students and parents.
- Assess whether the school has the resources and commitment to implement a program that meets the standards put forth in this document.
- Assess the extent of knowledge and use of conflict resolution concepts and skills possessed by administrators, staff, students and parents.
- Assess customs, attitudes, and needs of diverse groups in the school community about conflict resolution including administrators, staff, students and parents.
- Assess perceptions of injustice or discrimination against any group within the school community and how that relates to conflict and its resolution.

Using the results from the needs assessment, design or revise the program to meet the needs of the school community in accordance with these standards. Establish program goals and objectives taking into account suitable ways to measure or evaluate the implementation process as well as outcomes.

Administrative Support

Obtain clear administrative support at the district and/or building level to

- build the capacity of the program to meet these standards;
- make at least a three-year commitment to fund and support the program;
- facilitate access to staff, students and resources, if choosing an outside organization/agency to train or help coordinate the program;
- empower students to be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of the program;
- ensure that all students and staff have access (physical, language, cultural, procedural) to the program;
- refer students to mediation and encourage staff to refer;
- ensure funding for training, curricula and program promotion;
- provide time for mediations, program coordination, on-going training and promotion;
- provide location/space for training and mediations to occur;
- set program goals
- define the function of mediation as distinct from that of counseling

Staffing
Every program needs an adult on-site Program Coordinator who is responsible for administering the peer mediation program and supervising and debriefing student mediators. A single person or a team of people who share the tasks and responsibilities may fill these functions. (See Section IV for Program Coordinator qualifications.) Students may assist with coordination under the supervision of the Program Coordinator.

- The Program Coordinator (or peer mediators they supervise) receives referrals, determines each case's suitability for mediation, schedules the session, assigns mediators to the case, maintains records and follows-up with the disputants to determine if they are upholding their agreement and if they are satisfied with the program.
- The Program Coordinator supervises the mediators during the mediation, either in the same room or nearby, debriefs them after the mediation and provides on-going training and support.
- Program Coordinators must be trained mediators.
- The Program Coordinator supports the peer mediators so that they uphold the Model Standards of Conduct for Peer Mediators (Section II).
- The Program Coordinator is ultimately responsible for ensuring that mediations are based on the principles of self-determination, voluntary participation, impartiality, mediator competence and confidentiality.

Programs also need access to the services of a Trainer, Educator of Trainers and/or an Advanced Practitioner to provide initial and on-going training to the Program Coordinator and the student mediators. A single person may meet the qualifications to be and fulfill the functions of a Program Coordinator and either a Trainer, Educator of Trainers or Advanced Practitioner. The person who trains school staff and students may be a school district employee or staff from an outside organization. In this document, these titles are used to explain the different responsibilities and expertise of individuals working in peer mediation program. (See Section IV for Trainer, Educator of Trainers or Advanced Practitioner qualifications.)

- Trainers train students to mediate in a peer mediation program.
- Educators of Trainers coach and train Trainers, Program Coordinators and student mediators.
- Advanced Practitioners train at all levels and all ages.
- A district-level Educator of Trainers or Advanced Practitioner provides training for staff and student mediators, maintains district-wide records, advocates for programs, coordinates among the programs and supports the on-site coordinators.

Program Models
The program coordinator, in collaboration with administrators and trainers, chooses the program model(s). These can change as the program develops.

<u>Philosophical/theoretical styles</u>

Programs can choose to train students in a style of mediation, such as the problem solving/facilitative, transformative, social justice or narrative style. Peer mediation may also be a part of a restorative justice or victim/offender program.

Structural models:

- Cadre Model: A group of students is selected and trained to be mediators.
- Whole classroom/school Model: Skills are taught to all students in the class/school, and all students have the opportunity to mediate conflicts with their classmates.
- Combination of the above models

Scheduling models:

- Mediators on call: The program coordinator has the mediators' schedules and calls them shortly after a referral is made. Mediators and disputants are allowed to miss class (or certain classes) in order to mediate.
- Scheduled hours: The mediators are stationed in the mediation room during certain times each day or each week. If there are no cases, the mediators may do role-plays, training with the coordinator, program tasks or schoolwork.
- Playground: The mediators are scheduled to be on duty during recess times on the playground. If they see a problem arising or if a conflict is referred to them, they can mediate the situation on the spot. Trained playground aides or program coordinators supervise the mediators.
- Combination of the above models

Policies

School Policies:

School disciplinary policies should include peer mediation as an option for resolving incidents brought about by interpersonal, intergroup, or institutional disputes. For mediation to be a viable option, certain circumstances are necessary. These include voluntary participation, a safe and respectful environment, a reasonable balance of power between the disputants, and the willingness of both parties to take responsibility for resolving the dispute.

The following issues belong in school policies pertaining to peer mediation programs.

- Clarification of the types of disputes that are appropriate for mediation. Peer mediation is appropriate for increasing communication and understanding between parties, improving relationships, and facilitating the negotiated resolution of behavior related to an interpersonal, intergroup, or institutional conflict. Mediation programs can accept conflicts dealing with difficult topics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, gender or personal beliefs, as well as issues such as relationships and property. If specifically trained, student mediators may mediate the more difficult cases, or adult mediators may mediate, or co-mediate these disputes with a student mediator. Incidents involving drugs, weapons, other illegal behaviors, abuse, harassment or bullying do not meet these criteria, are not appropriate for mediation and need other types of interventions.

- Referral to the program. When students' conflicts do not need disciplinary intervention, they may be referred directly or self-referred to the school mediation program. In the case that a conflict involves behaviors that violate the school's disciplinary code, school policy dictates the consequences; in addition, the interpersonal issues that caused the conflict may be mediated. Even though students may be referred to mediation by administrators, the principles of voluntary participation, self-determination and confidentiality still apply.
- Monitoring. An adult presence is required either in the room or nearby to monitor mediations involving only students.
- Confidentiality. The parties may specify in their agreement if and with whom they want the verbal or written agreement shared and who will be responsible for doing that. The Program Coordinator is obligated to keep confidential what was said or done in a mediation if they were present or what was reported by the mediators during debriefing, except any information that is an exception to confidentiality.
- Co-mediation. Peer mediation programs use a co-mediation model for student disputes in which at least two mediators work together. Mediation can also be an appropriate strategy for resolving behavior issues between a student and a teacher or other adult in the school if both parties agree to the mediation. A co-mediation team of a qualified adult and qualified student mediator may mediate adult/student disputes.
- Adult-adult mediations. Qualified adult mediators can mediate disputes between adults in the school setting, such as those involving administrators, teachers, other staff, and parents. Peer mediators do not mediate disputes involving only adults.

<u>Policies Concerning Student Mediators:</u>
Mediators are considered to be role models for other students, and as such, are expected to follow school rules, mediation program policies and procedures and to bring their own interpersonal conflicts to mediation when needed. Nonetheless, students with prior behavior problems or disciplinary referrals can be accepted into the mediation program, and they often become excellent mediators.

Policies that deal with student mediator behavior are clearly explained to the mediators. They include the following and any other issues deemed necessary by the school or district.

- Adherence to the Model Standards of Conduct for Peer Mediators (Section III)
- Program and school responsibilities

Procedures
The Program Coordinator establishes efficient operating procedures to encourage referrals to and utilization of the program, provides structure and support for mediators, and builds a strong program. The coordinator develops an action plan with timelines and responsibility for implementing and maintaining the program. Depending on the age and abilities of the student mediators, they can be responsible for establishing and implementing many procedures.

Selection of Student Mediators

- The peer mediation team reflects the diversity of the school's community in all senses, including age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability, academic standing, socio-economic status and interests, so that all students feel comfortable participating in the program.
- The selection process can include teacher, student and self-referrals; an interview; a written application; teacher recommendations; and parent permission.
- The selection committee can include current mediators, program coordinator(s), and other members of the school community.
- The selection committee sets the criteria for selection, which can include willingness and ability to participate in training; communication and problem solving skills, responsibility, honesty, commitment, enthusiasm, flexibility, ability to maintain confidentiality, special talents such as bilingual skills, and contribution through life experience to the overall diversity of the mediation program.

Program Promotion

Coordinators ensure that information about program purpose, goals, benefits, procedures and outcomes is communicated to a variety of audiences, including administration, staff, peer mediators, disputants, other students, parents and the local community. This is done on an on-going basis and is essential to program success.

Sustainability

Schools strive to maintain the high quality of their program. Retaining a committed, enthusiastic person or team to coordinate the program is crucial to sustainability. In addition, they may incorporate the following:

- Adapting the process to meet the needs of diverse groups
- Advanced training for the coordinator and mediators
- Community outreach
- Fundraising
- In-service presentations to new staff
- Integration of conflict resolution concepts and skills into school curricula
- Networking with programs at other schools
- Presentations, workshops and training at conferences, other schools, community functions, etc.
- Small and large-group mediation, with appropriate training and skills
- Teacher-student mediation, with appropriate training and skills
- Special events to acknowledge and sustain the mediators

SECTION V:
RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR
TRAINING
FOR SCHOOL-BASED PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMS

Training for Student Mediators

A successful peer mediation program requires several levels of training and support. The proficiency of student mediators may range from basic to advanced. A peer mediator with basic training and skills has the ability to succeed as a member of a peer mediation team. A peer mediator with advanced training and skills can use a variety of conflict management processes and serve as a mentor to other peer mediators. The qualifications of trainers are explained later in this section. Evaluation is an important part of training and is covered in Section VI of this document.

Training Techniques/Methods

Student training consists of a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, including, but not limited to presentations, demonstrations, modeling, interactive and written exercises, role-plays and various media. The method of training is as important as the content. A diverse training team reflecting, as much as possible, the diversity of the students being trained is recommended. Training includes information on working with diverse groups, as well as being mindful of social justice issues around gender, race, class, language minorities, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Training Content for Student Mediators

Student mediators conduct mediations for their peers and work with the coordinator to manage a peer mediation program for the school. At a minimum, their initial training content includes the items listed below, as developmentally appropriate. These standards reflect the necessary content for a program using the facilitative/problem-solving model. In cases where another model is used (i.e. transformative, narrative, restorative, social justice, etc.), please refer to one of the organizations that train in that model.

1. Conflict

Peer mediators will be able to:

a) Define conflict and its benefits
b) Differentiate among different conflict resolution styles
c) Describe different types of conflict
d) Recognize different points of view
e) Identify bias in communication
f) Apply prejudice reduction strategies
g) Describe power and inequity in relationships
h) Use strategies for equalizing power

i) Recognize ways that cultural groups in the school population view and handle conflicts
j) Identify appropriate issues for peer mediation

2. Communication

Peer mediators will be able to:

a) Explain why effective communication is important
b) Describe the components of non-verbal communication
c) Identify good and poor listening skills
d) Apply active listening skills (e.g., I-messages, paraphrasing, restating, summarizing, clarifying, reflecting, reframing, encouraging, listening for feelings)
e) Apply appropriate questioning strategies, including open-ended questions
f) Reframe inflammatory statements into neutral language
g) Recognize culturally diverse styles of communication and negotiation

3. Mediation

Peer Mediators will be able to:

a) Define mediation
b) Explain the preliminary assumptions (voluntary participation, confidentiality, neutrality, etc.) about mediation
c) Apply mediation ground rules
d) Follow the steps or stages of a mediation process
e) Analyze conflicting points of view (including diverse perspectives and perceptions, etc.)
f) Identify positions, interests and issues in a conflict
g) Guide disputants in generating options and applying brainstorming strategies
h) Guide disputants in synthesizing potential solutions
i) Help parties choose a resolution
j) Create a written agreement that is specific, realistic…
k) Work effectively with a co-mediator
l) Identify techniques for handling anger and other strong emotions
m) Apply skills relating to other issues (remaining neutral, building trust, cooperation, giving affirmation as appropriate, etc.)

4. Program Policies & Procedures

Peer Mediators will be able:

a) Describe Program-specific policies and procedures. See Program Development & Management (Section IV)
b) Apply the Model Standards Conduct for Peer Mediators (Section III)

Length of Training

The schedule for training student mediators is planned to accommodate a particular school's schedule and the age and developmental level of the students. For example, a training for elementary students might be conducted in 90-minute sessions over a several week period, while a training for high school students might be done in full-day sessions over a one or two week period.

The hours below reflect a minimum total of time needed for the students to be prepared to mediate. Length of session and span of time are determined by the trainers in consultation with the Program Coordinator and relevant school staff. Students are expected to attend the training in its entirety. Schools in which conflict resolution or violence prevention training has already taken place may fall at the lower end of the number of hours below:

1. Elementary: 12-18 hours
2. Middle School: 12-18 hours
3. High School: 15-20 hours
4. Ongoing Mediator Training: 12 plus hours per year

When student mediators move from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school, they receive additional age-appropriate training that builds on what they have learned previously and enhances their skills and knowledge of the mediation process.

Ongoing Mediator Training

Program Coordinators and Trainers look at the specific needs of the program to develop ongoing mediator training. This covers such topics as:

a) Additional bias awareness and cultural competence
b) Difficult situations
c) Power issues
d) Problem solving skills
e) Reflective practice (critiquing one's own work as a mediator)
f) Student mediator involvement in program coordination, including intake and case management
g) Representing and marketing the peer mediation program and the field
h) Review and reinforcement of skills taught in the mediation training
i) Teambuilding
j) Adult/student mediations
k) Coaching other mediators
l) Multi-party disputes or group facilitation
m) Using technology resources or multimedia (i.e. online dispute resolution)

Professional Development for Adults

Every peer mediation program needs a qualified, adult Program Coordinator. Additionally, every program needs to have access to qualified mediation Trainers. In order to train Coordinators and Trainers in peer mediation, schools need access to Educators of Trainers and Advanced Practitioners. (In this document, these titles are used to explain the different responsibilities and expertise of individuals working in peer mediation program.) In some settings, a single person may perform more than one of these roles. Students can perform some of the functions of Program Coordinators and Trainers. Outside trainers can be brought in as needed. The minimum knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform the functions of each of these are detailed below and should be covered in any preparatory training for the position.

Program Coordinators

Program Coordinators are responsible for administering and maintaining the peer mediation program, as well as supervising and debriefing student mediators. The Coordinator may be a single person or a team of people who share the tasks and responsibilities. Ideally, Coordinators are not responsible for administering school wide discipline, in order to keep separate the school's discipline and mediation functions. Program Coordinators are trained mediators. The student training may serve as the mediation training component for program coordinators and other interested school staff. Each program needs a Program Coordinator. Program Coordinators also need training or experience in program and student supervision; diversity and equity issues in program management and conflict resolution; and complex confidential and disciplinary issues.

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By the end of their preparatory training, Program Coordinators should be able to:

- Uphold these Recommended Standards for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs
- Mediate disputes, by documenting completion of student or adult mediation training

Program Promotion and Advocacy

- Commit personally to program creation and support
- Foster administrative, faculty, student and parent support
- Advocate the benefits of a mediation program
- Articulate the goals of the program
- Promote the mediation program
- Explain the role of mediation in the school as part of a comprehensive violence prevention, school safety or school climate improvement plan
- Generate ideas for sustaining successful programs

Program Management

- Ensure a needs assessment is conducted
- Schedule time to implement the program

- Access resources, services, and advanced training available to support the program
- Establish new or maintain current policies, procedures and forms
- Handle intake and case management
- Manage program budget
- Maintain necessary records

Work with students
- Recruit and select students
- Empower students to coordinate the mediation program, as appropriate developmentally

Commitment to meeting needs of diverse groups
- Demonstrate personal understanding of own biases and efforts at prejudice reduction
- Work with student mediators on understanding diverse groups, bias awareness and prejudice reduction
- Incorporate into the program the needs of diverse groups in the school community

Trainers

Trainers train students to mediate in a school-based peer mediation program. As part of their preparation, Trainers have completed a 20 – 40 hour mediation training and have demonstrated effective training and facilitation skills. Students who are Trainers should meet the following criteria and also be experienced mediators.

Training consists of a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, including, but not limited to presentations, demonstrations, modeling, interactive and written exercises, role-plays and various media. The method of training is as important as the content. A diverse training team reflecting, as much as possible, the diversity of the participants being trained is recommended. Training includes information on working with diverse groups, as well as being mindful of social justice issues around gender, race, class, language minorities, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

By the end of their preparatory training, Trainers should be able to

1. Work effectively with students
2. Mediate competently
3. Teach the overall mediation process
4. Teach all peer mediation skills
5. Identify bias and prejudice
6. Offer strategies for mediators to reduce their own biases and prejudice
7. Teach mediators how to discuss issues of diversity and inequity during a mediation if disputants have these as issues

8. Teach mediators how to reduce the negative effects of bias and prejudice during a mediation
9. Facilitate student learning effectively using a variety of interactive teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles:
    a) Brainstorming
    b) Coaching
    c) Group work
    d) Modeling
    e) Presentation
    f) Role plays
    g) Student input
    h) Multimedia-based learning

Educators of Trainers

Educators of Trainers coach and train Trainers, Program Coordinators and student mediators. They can evaluate, select and coach others including students to become Trainers. They also help set up programs, monitor progress and deal with special situations or problems. Although these Educators of Trainers may be outside trainers, school districts may want to hire qualified people to fill this role within the district.

An Educator of Trainers meets the following requirements:

1. Possesses Program Coordinator and Trainer skills and knowledge
2. Completed two years of experience as an effective Trainer
3. Completed a basic adult mediation course
4. Mediated or observed at least five adult mediations
5. Continues to receive advanced training (university courses, workshops, conferences, district sponsored professional education) in peer mediation, conflict resolution or adult mediation
6. Trained and experienced in diversity and equity issues as they relate to conflict resolution
7. Networks with other conflict resolution trainers and professionals
8. Able to guide Trainers and Program Coordinators to information and resources on issues such as the following:
    a) Bullying prevention
    b) Conflict resolution education
    c) Conflict resolution theory
    d) Dynamics of classroom management
    e) Funding
    f) Negotiation and facilitation
    g) Online dispute resolution
    h) Peace education
    i) Problem-solving skills and methods
    j) Social justice and advanced diversity issues

Advanced Practitioners

Advanced Practitioners train at all levels and all ages. The Advanced Practitioner is a resource for other trainers, programs in trouble, large-scale programs and complex program designs.

An Advanced Practitioner meets the following requirements:

1. Possesses all Educators of Trainers skills and knowledge
2. Developed expertise in the field of mediation, peer mediation, conflict resolution, professional development models and/or multicultural education
3. Worked with peer mediation programs at least five years
4. Designed a portfolio of training materials, conference presentations and advanced workshops related to effective peer mediation training and program coordination
5. Demonstrates an understanding of a systematic process for training and evaluating student mediators, Program Coordinators, Trainers and Educators of Trainers
6. Capable of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of peer mediation programs

RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION

Evaluating program effectiveness is an essential component of a peer mediation program. It is important for program improvement and sustainability, promotion to school and community, and reporting to funders and stakeholders.

Program Evaluation

School mediation programs should be evaluated based on accomplishing the standards listed in this document. This can be a program self-assessment, evaluation by the school district, and/or outside evaluation. Every evaluation/assessment should involve both students and adults. Deciding on the program goals and objectives is the place to begin to think about suitable ways to measure or evaluate your implementation process as well as outcomes.

Data may be collected to answer questions such as those listed below to provide information about the implementation of the program as well as measurable outcomes:

Implementation/Activities:

- How many cases were referred to mediation? Have referral patterns changed from prior years? Over the course of the year?
- Where do referrals come from? How many cases were self-referred by disputants?
- How many cases were mediated? What was the disposition of those cases not mediated?
- How many mediations resulted in an agreement?
- Were there patterns in the topics that were handled in mediation?
- What were the demographics of mediators and disputants?
- What percentage of the student population used the program?
- What percentage of the staff made referrals to the program?
- How many mediations did each mediator conduct?
- What was the frequency of mediator participation in ongoing mediator program events including skills training?
- What did the program cost?
- How many staff hours did it use?
- How many parents or community members were involved?

Outcomes:

- How satisfied were disputants with their mediation? How many agreements were kept?
- How satisfied are people in the school community (mediators, disputants, other students, faculty, staff, administrators, parents) with the program?
- How satisfied are groups based on gender, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, class, etc. with the program?
- In what ways were parents or community members involved? How satisfied with the outcome were they?
- How did the mediation program contribute to decreasing injustice, intergroup tension and other social justice issues in the school?

- Did the program meet its goals?

Training Evaluation

The training of student mediators, Program Coordinators, Trainers, Educators of Trainers and Advanced Practitioners should be evaluated for effectiveness. Methods for training evaluation may include the following:

- Pre and/or post test
- Skills checklist or rubric to assess performance readiness
- Trainee feedback on training and instructor effectiveness
- Trainer self-assessment and/or peer assessment

Mediator Competence Evaluation

Student mediators are evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine capability to mediate and needs for skill development. Methods for evaluating mediators can include the following:

- Mediator self assessment and mediation debriefing; and
- Observation of skills, performance and commitment by program coordinators, trainers, and/or peers;
- Core knowledge test;
- Feedback from disputants.

Research

Educational research may also examine the impact of peer mediation programs by correlating program data with other school information such as changes in numbers of fights, disciplinary referrals, test scores, academic achievement, attendance, school climate, truancy, dropout patterns, impact on relationships, reduction in perceptions and accusation of intergroup tension and injustice. Because of the many variables in school settings, experienced educational researchers should do this type of analysis.

RESOURCES

Please visit the Education Section on the ACR website at http://www.mediate.com/acreducation/.