



Alternative Dispute Resolution Law Office/ Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Law Office/Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (ADRLO/CPRC) provides conflict prevention and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services to EPA headquarters and Regional offices, and external stakeholders. The ADRLO/CPRC assists in developing effective ways to anticipate, prevent, and resolve disputes, and makes neutral third parties more readily available for those purposes. The ADRLO/CPRC is responsible for offering ADR services and training under the authority of the Administrative Dispute Resolution Act (ADRA) of 1996, Regulatory Negotiation Act of 1996, and EPA's ADR policy (December 2000), which is required by the ADRA.

What is ADR?

ADR techniques involve a neutral third party who assists parties in designing and conducting a process for reaching agreement, if possible. Examples of ADR techniques include facilitation, mediation, fact-finding, and non-binding arbitration. Typically, all aspects of ADR are voluntary, including the decision to participate, the type of process used, and the content of any final agreement, although federal courts have required the use of ADR in some cases. Among ADR's goals are:

- Faster resolution of issues;
- More creative, satisfying, and enduring solutions;
- Reduced transaction costs;
- Improved working relationships; and
- Increased stakeholder support for Agency programs.

EPA's ADR Policy

Under EPA's ADR policy, the Agency encourages the use of ADR techniques to prevent and resolve disputes with external parties in many contexts, including adjudications, rulemaking, policy development, administrative and civil judicial enforcement actions, permit issuance, protests of contract awards, administration of contracts and grants, stakeholder involvement, negotiations, and litigation.

In addition, the EPA policy encourages the use of ADR techniques to prevent and resolve internal disputes such as workplace grievances and equal opportunity employment complaints, and to improve labor-management partnerships.

ADRLO/CPRC Services

Legal Interpretation and Policy - The ADRLO provides legal counsel for Agency offices on the ADRA and other statutes and regulations governing Federal ADR practice and procedure. The ADRLO/CPRC also develops and implements all Agency ADR policy.

Case Support/Counseling - The ADRLO/CPRC assists EPA offices and other parties in determining whether stakeholder involvement, consensus building or ADR processes are appropriate for particular environmental decisions. In appropriate cases, ADRLO/CPRC staff serve as convenors, mediators, facilitators, and other neutral third parties.

Neutral Third Party Access - ADRLO/CPRC staff assist EPA offices and other parties in identifying sources of neutral third parties; gaining access to a variety of procurement vehicles; and getting the most benefit from having a neutral third party involved in a decision making process.

Training and Information - The ADRLO/CPRC works with EPA offices to custom design ADR trainings and identify existing training to meet organizational ADR needs. The ADRLO/CPRC maintains Internet/Intranet web sites and develops ADR guidance documents.

For More Information

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