

# NYSDRA NEWS & VIEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter of the New York State Dispute Resolution Association

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*Celebrating 40+ Years of Dispute Resolution*

March 2026

## [A Word from NYSDRA's Executive Director](#)



**Theresa Hobbs**  
Executive Director

This second issue of *News and Views* highlights the strength and momentum of NYSDRA's collaborative network. Featured within is an introduction to the 2026 Board of Directors whose leadership helps guide our shared work across programs and partnerships statewide.

Alongside this, the issue underscores the continued importance of mediation within ACCES-VR services and the vital role local community dispute resolution centers play in ensuring timely, constructive resolution for participants.

Recent recognition from NAFCM serves as a reflection of that same spirit of partnership—an honor made possible by the collective efforts of colleagues and centers across the state. In that collaborative vein, NYSDRA is also pleased to announce its partnership with ADR Notable, supporting ADR professionals with organizational tools to manage their practices. Also, beginning with this issue, *News & Views* will feature a new section highlighting updates from Community Dispute Resolution Centers across the state. We hope this space will help strengthen connections across the network and celebrate the important work happening in communities throughout New York.

Continuing in the spirit of connection, please save the date – **October 8-9, 2026** – for NYSDRA's upcoming annual conference - an opportunity to come together, learn from one another, and continue strengthening mediation services throughout New York.

## [NYSDRA Board Meets to Launch the Year Ahead](#)

On Friday, February 20, 2026, NYSDRA's Board of Directors gathered at The James Newbury Hotel in Cossackie for a full day of planning, learning, and connection. The meeting set a positive tone for the year ahead, with conversations focused on collaboration, strong governance, and the continued advancement of mediation and conflict resolution services across New York State.



New Board President [Shira May](#), Ph.D., shared her vision for 2026, outlining priorities and framing the board's work for the coming year. Joining her in leadership are Vice President [Love Odih Kumuyi](#), Esq., who facilitated a strategic planning and vision conversation; Secretary [Gina Tinker-Williams](#), BFA; and Treasurer [Bruce Sussman](#), CPA, CISA, CISSP, PCI-ISA, CIPP / IT, who led a training on board fiscal responsibilities and oversight.

Advocacy consultant Bethany Snyder joined remotely to facilitate a discussion on advocacy strategy and opportunities to strengthen NYSDRA's statewide voice. Current board members include [Jonathan Murray](#), MBA; [Denise Ellison](#), M.A.; [Kim Stone Reisch](#), Esq.;

The meeting concluded with a special moment of appreciation honoring outgoing Board President Jonathan Murray for his leadership and dedicated service to NYSDRA.

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## Spotlight - Board Member Bruce Sussmann



NYSDRA is fortunate to benefit from the expertise and steady leadership of newest board member and treasurer Bruce Sussman, CPA, CISA, CISSP, PCI-ISA, CIPP / IT, whose career in global risk management, financial oversight, and organizational strategy brings exceptional value to the association. A senior executive in information security and operational risk at American International Group (AIG), Bruce oversees global initiatives across more than 30 countries, managing complex compliance and financial systems with clarity and precision.

His professional background—spanning cybersecurity, internal controls, audit frameworks, and large-scale budget management—translates directly into thoughtful fiscal stewardship for NYSDRA. As Treasurer, Bruce helps ensure that the organization’s financial practices are sound, transparent, and aligned with its mission, providing the board with clear insight and guidance as it supports mediation services statewide.

Beyond his technical expertise, Bruce brings a collaborative and mentoring spirit that strengthens NYSDRA’s governance and long-term sustainability. Known for building strong relationships and translating complex risk and financial issues into practical solutions, he has already contributed valuable training and perspective to the board’s work. His approach—grounded in strategic planning, accountability, and forward-looking risk awareness—will help NYSDRA remain resilient and responsive in a changing funding and policy landscape. We are grateful for Bruce’s leadership, his thoughtful engagement with the board, and the stability and insight he brings to NYSDRA as Board Treasurer.

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## Celebrating National Recognition for Theresa Hobbs

We are delighted to share that NYSDRA Executive Director Theresa Hobbs, J.D., MBA, LPEC has been named the 2025 David Brandon Community Mediation Regional Catalyst by the National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM). This national honor recognizes Theresa’s collaborative, visionary leadership and celebrates what NAFCM describes as her role in “building a regenerative ecosystem of justice, compassion, and community healing across New York State.”

From strengthening and expanding programs statewide to elevating the work of Community Dispute Resolution Centers and their partners, Theresa’s leadership reflects the collective impact of our entire network. We are proud to see NYSDRA’s work recognized at the national level—and grateful for the community of community dispute resolution centers, mediators, staff, volunteers, and partners who make this shared success possible.

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## NYSDRA Partnership with ADR Notable



## ADR Notable

NYSDRA is pleased to partner with ADR Notable to connect their case and practice management platform with mediators, arbitrators, and ADR professionals seeking organizational tools to manage their practices efficiently. Built for the dispute resolution field, the ADR Notable platform supports professional practice management while respecting ethics, neutrality, and trust.

To learn more about ADR Notable, please use our affiliate link: [ADR Notable Link](#)

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### Mediation in ACCES-VR Services



In this newsletter, we want to highlight one of our disability mediation programs: Adult Career and Continuing Ed Services – Vocational Rehabilitation or ACCES-VR. ACCES-VR plays a critical role in helping individuals with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain meaningful employment. Given the complexity of vocational rehabilitation services—often involving clients, families, counselors, providers, and employers—disagreements can arise around eligibility, services, plans, or timelines.

Through its mediation services, NYSDRA supports ACCES-VR participants and professionals by promoting communication and problem-solving. As we know, mediation can reduce delays, ease frustration, and strengthen trust—ultimately helping individuals move forward in their vocational goals. CDRCs are encouraged to proactively share information about ACCES-VR mediation with counselors, service providers, and community partners. Early outreach helps ensure stakeholders understand when mediation may be appropriate, how to request it, and how it can support timely, collaborative resolution.

For more information on ACCES-VR, check out our website: [ACCES-VR Program Page](#)

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### Introducing CDRC Network News



**And from Leanne Lawson at MCDC in Poughkeepsie:**



Bridging late 2025 and early 2026, the **Mediation Center of Dutchess County (MCDC)** is thrilled to share that our latest cohort of initial mediation training apprentices have completed training! Led by MCDC friend and trainer Jody Miller, our 10 trainees immersed in the transformative style and deepened their practical skills through rigorous role-playing activities. This spring, they'll continue learning during their apprenticeships. MCDC is proud of and grateful for each of them!

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## **Become a NYSDRA Member!**

Whether you are a seasoned mediator or just entering the field, NYSDRA offers a community, a platform, and a shared mission. We hope you'll be part of it. Joining or renewing your membership connects you to a statewide network committed to strengthening mediation and expanding access to justice across New York. Your support helps sustain training, collaboration, and advocacy efforts that benefit practitioners and communities alike—while keeping you informed and engaged in the work we do together.

Membership includes professional development through trainings and networking opportunities within our extensive referral network; access to advocacy campaigns and organizing platforms that amplify member voices and drive policy impact at state, local, and national levels; discounted rates for NYSDRA trainings and the NYSDRA Annual Conference; and special tuition pricing at Marist College for members and their immediate family.

Explore our membership levels and become a member: **[NYSDRA Membership](#)**

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## **Upcoming NYSDRA Trainings and Support Events:** **March 2026 - June 2026**

### **Special Education Dispute Resolution Center (SEDRC)**

- CDRC Special Ed Coordinators Quarterly gathering: March 4 & June 3, 2026
- Special Education Learning Communities: May 13, 2026

*Contact [info@osedisputeresolution.org](mailto:info@osedisputeresolution.org) or 1-855-RESOLVE for more information*

### **Lemon Law Arbitration Program**

- Semi-Annual CDRC Coordinators Meeting: April 1, 2026
- Quarterly Meeting for Arbitrators: April 28, 2026
- Annual CDRC Coordinators Training: May 19, 2026

*Contact [don@nysdra.org](mailto:don@nysdra.org) or (518) 687-2240 ext. 104*

### **Community Mediation Service Corps (CMSC)**

- Restorative Practices: March 11 – 13, 2026
- Custody Visitation: April 13 – 17, 2026
- Anti-Bias: May 7 – 8, 2026
- Trauma Informed Practices (Part 1): May 22, 2026

*Contact [toni@nysdra.org](mailto:toni@nysdra.org) or 518-687-2240 ext. 105*

### **Early Intervention**

- CDRC Early Intervention Coordinators Quarterly gathering: May 5, 2026

Founded in 1985, the New York State Dispute Resolution Association promotes and strengthens the use of dispute resolution throughout New York State. Through training, advocacy, and collaboration with courts, government agencies, and community organizations, NYSdra supports a statewide network of 18 Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRCs) that provide mediation and restorative practices to thousands of individuals, families, and communities annually. For more information, visit [www.nysdra.org](http://www.nysdra.org).



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