

# Department of Energy

## Albuquerque Operations Office

### **ADR Technique: Mediation**

#### ***How the ADR System Works***

Employees are encouraged to use mediation as a tool to address any issue that may interfere with employee morale, productivity, and work efficiency. Such issues are unavoidable in any workplace, and particularly in a workforce as large, diverse, and geographically dispersed as the activities reporting to the Albuquerque office. Employees are always encouraged to discuss issues with their immediate supervisor, with the understanding that they may pursue the administrative grievance process or the EEO Discrimination Complaints Process within the prescribed time frames. Mediators are supplied by a contractor. Each mediation participant is given an evaluation form. Additionally, employees are provided an agency point-of-contact if they prefer to provide an evaluation orally. Because of the confidentiality built into the program, evaluations cannot be matched to a particular case, but they allow continuous improvement of the overall program.

#### ***Background/Objective***

The program goal is to address, as early as possible, any work-related dispute in an objective and confidential manner that inspires trust and achieves win-win solutions. Continued use of mediation helps the organization reach its strategic goals and operate within its core values.

#### ***Duration/Current Activity***

This program began as DOE's first mediation pilot in May 1994 and became permanent because of its success. Its total cost through September 2001 has been \$30,141. During that time, there have been 56 mediations with 36 successful resolutions. Since the EEOC's low-range estimate for the cost of a formal EEO complaint is \$70,000, the program has clearly been highly cost-effective. Evaluations by participants show they are generally pleased with the program and believe that it facilitates fair and impartial resolutions to issues in the workplace. The program is actively promoted, with information made available to all employees and briefings provided to senior managers and EEO counselors.

### ***Rules Governing the Activity***

Aggrieved individuals have the right to representation throughout the complaint process, including during any mediation. While the purpose of mediation is to allow the parties to fashion their own resolution to a dispute, it is important that the mediation program provides all parties the opportunity to bring a representative to the mediation if they desire to do so.

### ***Contact***

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