

Agency Name: Dispute Resolution Center of Montgomery County, Inc. (DRC-MC).

Address and Service Area: 301 N. Thompson Street, Suite 106, Conroe, Texas 77301. The DRC-MC serves the entire Montgomery County area.

Year Founded: 1988.

Number of Paid Staff: 4.5 employees.

Project Contact Name: Elaine Roberts (LMC 2016). **Title:** Executive Director.

Mission and vision of organization: To provide and promote affordable, high-quality dispute resolution services and training in the Montgomery County area. Our vision is to (1) Expand the geographic scope of the DRC-MC's conflict resolution services and training to all residents in the rapidly growing Montgomery County area. (2) Ensure that the DRC-MC is responsive to current community needs and legislative directives while also being innovative in developing programs and services that will benefit Montgomery County residents in the future. (3) Be a Center of Excellence (COE) for dispute resolution services and training.

Description of proposed project(s): The DRC-MC will be pleased with any project(s) that LMC chooses: (a) Refurbish well-worn mediation room that contains oversized, wobbly furniture and dark and depressing paint on walls. (b) Assist with website (www.resolution-center.org) design or assist with building a website redesign plan, including marketing for roll out of new website, a volunteer enrollment campaign, Zoom mediation instructional materials and information for low-income households about no cost assistance at the DRC-MC. (c) Develop and implement a digital records management system that complies with the DRC-MC Document Retention/Destruction Policy. (d) Develop DRC-MC Business Continuity Manual. (e) Develop a Volunteer Training Handbook of DRC-MC policies and procedures. (f) Revise and update DRC-MC Employee Guidelines and Procedures Handbook. (g) Provide portable filtration systems for mediation rooms, communal spaces, and staff offices to ensure a safe return to in-person work and mediations. (h) Assist with development of an art project that utilizes over 3,000 pieces of bookmark art created by Montgomery County students that can be available to share the students' anti-bullying and peace building messages with the public. (i) Assist with preparing a volunteer recruitment video. (j) Assist the DRC-MC to move one of its signature projects - The Conflict Resolution Bookmark Art Contest (BAC)- from the fall to spring semester by doing any or all of the following: Marketing to ensure that Montgomery County teachers and children in Grades K-8 are aware that the BAC will move to 2022 Spring semester; Updating contact lists for art teachers at all schools (Including home school art teachers) in Montgomery County; Developing a plan for contest deadlines, bookmark judging and bookmark awards ceremony during the spring semester of 2021-2022 school year; Revising/updating contest flyers and social media releases; Helping to judge the bookmark art entries at least 3 weeks prior to Awards Ceremony; Helping to raise funds for the winners' cash prizes and for anti-bullying books awarded to teachers/schools that have entries; Assembling items to include in student "swag bags" and helping to prepare the swag bags for distribution at the BAC Awards Ceremony; Preparing for and assisting with either in-person or online Awards Ceremony to honor BAC winners and their schools; Arranging post ceremony press releases about BAC winners; Assisting with printing and distribution of approximately 20,000 laminated bookmarks across Montgomery County.

Proposed project budget: Many of the proposed projects seek only in-kind donations. While their in-kind value will vary depending on the number of people involved in the project, we know that updating the Employee Guidelines and Procedures Handbook and developing a Continuity Plan and a Volunteer Training Handbook would cost the DRC-MC at least \$2500 each to have an outside source complete. The DRC-MC also believes that it would cost at least \$3,000 for website redesign. The estimated cost of other proposed project(s) - Refurbishment of the mediation room (paint and furniture) should cost no more than about \$3,500. Portable Air

Filtration Systems for mediation rooms, common areas and offices= \$4500. Art project framing and/or supplies= \$1500. Bookmark Art Contest (BAC) Costs: \$1500 = prizes for BAC winners. \$1200= anti-bullying books for Montgomery County schools. \$2,000= cost of 20,000 laminated bookmarks for distribution in Montgomery County. \$300 = cost of refreshments and supplies for in-person Awards Ceremony. Total= \$ 5,000 for the BAC. The DRC-MC would be most grateful for whatever project(s) the LMC Class of 2022 chooses to undertake. Even if the class chose to do all possible projects, the estimated budget for all projects is still below the class limits for actual expenditures and in-kind donations.

Any constraints to completing the project(s) by April 2022: None.

Opportunities for 45 class members to be involved in the project(s): Because the 2022 LMC class is such a diverse group of talented professionals, the DRC-MC submitted a variety of projects that tap into and seek to build upon the participants' legal, financial, medical/public safety, marketing, real estate, technical, sales, public service, artistic, management and organizational skills. Individual projects suggested, such as the Conflict Resolution Bookmark Art Contest, can utilize the talent and expertise of all 45-class members on that one project. See the **Description of Proposed Projects** for more detailed breakdowns of some of the task assignments needed to complete projects such as the Bookmark Art Contest and website design/website redesign plan, etc.

Alternatively, if the class wishes to accept more than one project, it can establish teams for each component of those projects. See for example, the proposed project of developing a volunteer recruitment video that compliments the website design/website redesign plan project proposal. By combining smaller projects, the LMC class of 2022 should have multiple ways for all 45-class members to contribute. All the proposed projects promote teamwork and require leadership skills to complete.

How will this project benefit the community: The DRC-MC is the only entity in Montgomery County that provides low-cost or free mediation services to low-income households and to victims of domestic violence and child, elder or disability related abuse. Funds and staff time saved due to LMC assistance will be devoted to additional pro bono mediations and training. Increased mediations will help to reduce pandemic related court backlogs and help bring finality and permanency for the community members. Conflict training will help community members develop the skills necessary to retain jobs, housing, and community peace even when conflict arises. Manual revisions will help ensure that the DRC-MC complies with new pandemic regulations/requirements and addresses the needs of its hybrid work force and community members. The community will benefit from the DRC-MC's increased transparency and the additional guidance the finished manuals will provide. A digital records management system will help conserve very limited file space and reduce the expense/environmental cost of paper records. Environmental benefits will carry over to the public from the DRC-MC's decreased paper usage. A redesigned DRC-MC website will improve public access to mediation and training services, ensure ADA compliance and aid in the recruitment of volunteer mediators/trainers. The community will also benefit from easier and more efficient training and mediation registrations and updated materials. Portable filtration systems will provide a safer place for DRC-MC employees, community visitors and volunteers to mediate and/or receive training. A refurbished mediation room will save staff time that is now devoted to repeatedly repairing the aging furniture. It will also provide community members with mediation/training room that is brighter, more cheerful, more accessible, and safer. A completed community art piece made from bookmark art and the 2022 Conflict Resolution Bookmark Art Contest will both promote goodwill in the community and help teachers and students to discuss/consider difficult topics (i.e., bullying and conflict) in a fun/productive manner. The laminated bookmarks and finished artwork will be a source of ongoing community pride and positive messaging for years to come.