

Turning Conflict
into Conversation



Report to the Community
2021-2022

Letter from our Leaders

Dear Friends,

2022 has been a big year for MCDC. As of this writing, we've helped 1,036 individuals, families, and children face the conflicts of their lives. We've partnered with agencies to share community-building and conflict-responsive communication. We've debuted a mini-documentary and launched a new website.

These service milestones bring us closer to realizing our vision of a future where people embrace conflict as an opportunity for growth. And while we're proud of these accomplishments - we feel a special pride for the ways you make these moments possible.

Whether you've shared our website with friends, referred family members, volunteered your time, or made a meaningful donation, you are central to the Mediation Center.

In this report, you'll find a selection of stories representing a range of our work. You'll hear the unique voices of neighbors and friends, volunteers and staff. These conversations are at the heart of our work, and we hope you'll enjoy them.

Looking ahead, we are heartened to have you amongst our community. Next year we'll celebrate 40 years of serving Dutchess County. In the coming weeks and months, you'll hear more about our plans for this anniversary. We hope you'll join us in recognizing the past and toasting to the future!

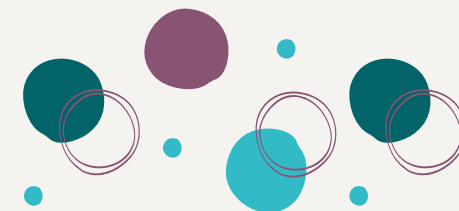
With appreciation,



Leanne Lawson, MSW
MCDC Executive Director



Marcel Martino
MCDC Board President



Our People

as of 11.1.22



Board of Directors

Marcel Martino, President

James Melitski, PhD, Vice President

Joseph A. Di Palo, MBA, LNHA, Treasurer

Stacey Lee, NYS Notary Public, Secretary

Robert R. Haskins

Diane Jablonski

Steffen T. Kraehmer, CFRE

Amanda Sen, J.D., M.A.Ed.



Staff Members

Leanne Lawson, MSW, Executive Director

Claudia Abbott-Barish,

Director of Restorative Justice Programs

Shirley A. Adams, MPA, Administrative Assistant

Des, Family & Divorce Program Coordinator

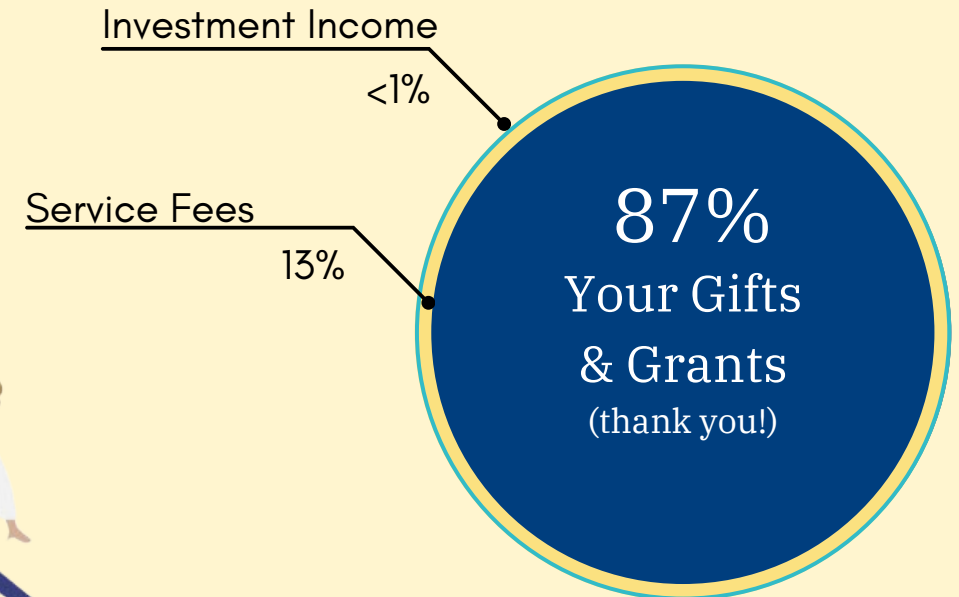
Denise Martin, Finance Manager

Amy Tirado, BA, Community Mediation Coordinator

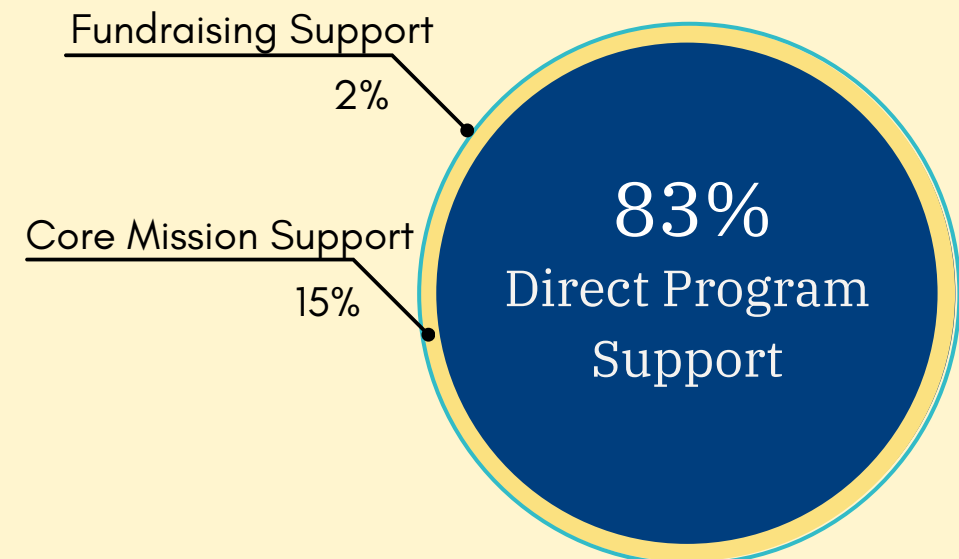
Our Finances

at end of FY2021

Revenues



Expenses



Transformation is Possible

*Individuals came to the table —
a family emerged*

This year our volunteers and staff brought 544 mediation cases to the table. While each conversation and outcome was unique to its participants their individual stories teach us what's possible.

Recently, volunteer mediators sat down with two individuals at odds over scheduling time with the children they shared. Both had moved forward in new relationships and struggled to make visitation work for everyone. In their communication break-down, each saw the other as the problem.



- 97% of cases are facilitated by volunteers
- 90% of mediation clients would recommend us

In the reflection step of the transformative mediation process, each had the opportunity to express themselves without fear or judgment. **Together, they discovered a new, shared perspective; there was no bad person in the room, there were only the difficulties of juggling priorities.** Recognizing that they both wanted the same thing—which was whatever was best for the children they re-established trust in shared decision-making.

With this renewed ground of trust, each stepped toward creating solutions with openness. By the end, they created a new schedule and apologized to one another. They rededicated themselves to making decisions as a cohesive, collaborative family again.

Showing Up for the Process

Volunteer mediator reflects on her experience

"I get so much more than I give," says Anna Brudvig of her role as a volunteer mediator. "To connect with the people of MCDC, learn these life-changing skills, and deepen my faith in fellow humans is a profound gift."

This heartfelt commitment has guided Anna's work with the Center since 2020. Encouraged by a friend, she was among a cohort of trainees whose journey started that February, just weeks before COVID arrived and changed everything.

Trainings moved online. Resources went digital. And the interpersonal work of facilitating difficult conversations shifted to the confines of Zoom.

Dedicated to seeing the process through and drawing on the wisdom of mediation mentor Barbra Cockerham, Anna successfully completed our apprenticeship program. Since then, she has mediated cases online and in person.

"There are unique benefits to being together, sitting across a table," Anna said. "Though the accessibility that Zoom provides is also special. I mediated cases where parties were in their cars, at the kitchen table, more able and perhaps more willing to make the conversation happen."

"Transformative mediation supports the individuals in conflict. It recognizes and empowers the innate knowledge people have about how to move through the smoke and the heat of conflict toward resolution. I am grateful to my mentor, the Center, and fellow volunteers for providing me the tools and honing my skills to support our neighbors. **Our human community needs this work and these opportunities to listen, reflect, and trust.**"

For our part, the Mediation Center is grateful for our volunteers who generously share their time and talents turning conflict into conversation.



Building Resilience and Trust With Youth

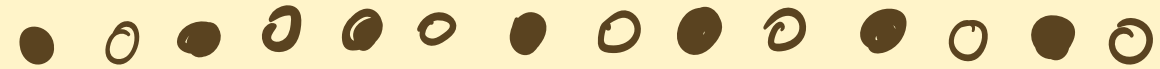
*Restorative Justice Initiative shares skills,
supports young people*



Before participants come to Circle, the practice begins with a Keeper setting the space. They'll arrange chairs or cushions in a circle formation so everyone can see each other equally. Next, they'll set a talking piece, and the tools needed for holding authentic conversation. **The intentionality is key to creating a safe and welcoming container for people to connect.**

This foundation is all the more important when bringing young people together in conversation—a particular interest of our Restorative Justice Initiative (RJI).

With funding from the Dutchess County Agency Partner Grant program, our RJI team shared Restorative and Circle practices with five youth-serving organizations in 2022. We guided students from Compass Arts, Finish Strong, Green Teens, REAL Skills Network, and Wappingers Junior High School to strengthen their communication and conflict resolution capacity.



"I think what's important to me about Circle, is being able to hear how everyone feels inside—getting the chance to actually listen to them and hear things from their point of view," said Aidon George, Green Teens Youth Circle Keeper.

To share the power of this work with others, our RJI team worked with filmmaker Lex Catania to create a 13-minute mini-documentary on Circle practice. The film features seven students who participated extensively in the practice, as they share their reflections on building community and connection through Circle. We're especially grateful to the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley for funding this project. You can watch the mini-documentary at DutchessMediation.org/News.

Serving Our Community, Centering Our Values

With launch of new website, visitors are empowered

Arrive at DutchessMediation.org, and you're greeted with calming colors, easy-to-read text, and welcoming language. **The visuals reflect the values we weave throughout our work; accessibility, belonging, integrity, and self-determination.**

Continuing on, users easily find information on our transformative mediation and restorative justice services. More than simply providing overviews, our new site helps neighbors determine whether we can support the conflict in their lives. With a quick, confidential quiz, they can connect with staff and decide what's best for their situation.



Recent Community Feedback:



Working with Drake Creative, we designed both form and function to the highest Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines. Future updates will extend user controls so people of all abilities can customize their experience.

To date, hundreds of neighbors have found themselves reflected and supported through the new site. Have you visited the website lately and want to share feedback? Please let us know your thoughts at: info@dutchessmediation.org.

YOU can help MCDC
turn conflict into conversation
by donating today!

Thank you for reading!

