

**MEDIATION PROGRAM
U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mediation Office provides alternative dispute resolution services to parties in civil cases pending before the District Court, Bankruptcy Court, and Court of Appeals. Robert Fisher is the Chief Circuit Mediator. Mediation referrals from the District Court and Bankruptcy Court are primarily administered by Circuit Mediator Heather Croft. Circuit Mediator Dina Gold has primary administrative responsibility for the Court of Appeals Mediation Program. Josie Kravec, Program Coordinator, provides support to the three Circuit Mediators and the panel of volunteer mediators. Judge Lamberth is the Liaison Judge for District and Bankruptcy Courts, and Judge Moss serves as the mediation Compliance Judge under LCvR 84.10.

The Mediation Program’s goals include: enhancing efficiency and economy for the Courts, litigants, and counsel by resolving cases without further litigation; enabling parties to reach mutually satisfactory resolutions that can include elements not available in formal judicial proceedings; clarifying or narrowing issues to be addressed by the Court; and providing a forum for parties to understand their situation and consider options other than litigation for resolving the disputes.

I. STATISTICS

The following statistics provide a snapshot of selected aspects of the Program during 2024 and 2025.¹ There are many ways to evaluate and measure success in mediation. In addition to settlement rates, other measures of success include the frequency with which District Court judges refer cases to the Program; the number and types of cases seeking or accepting referral to the Program; interest in serving on our panel of mediators; and participant satisfaction with the mediation process, mediators, and results.

A. DISTRICT COURT

i. Number of cases referred and settlement rate

	2024	2025	2024-25 Change
Civil cases referred for mediation ²	63	102	62%
Total completed cases / settled cases ³	73 / 50	71 / 37	-3% / -26%
Open cases at year-end ⁴	35	66	47%

¹ Statistics vary monthly and year-to-year. A single case may be reflected in more than one year’s case totals because of how our database counts each separately distinct mediation process.

² Only cases referred by the sitting judge are included in the District Court Program.

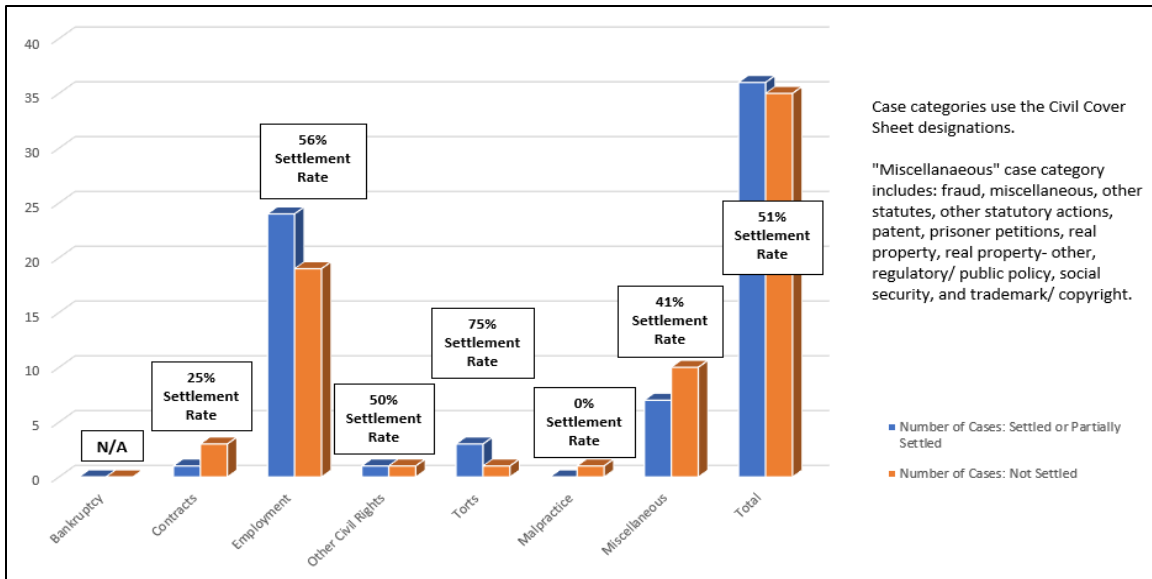
³ Includes two partially settled cases.

⁴ Includes cases initiated in prior years.

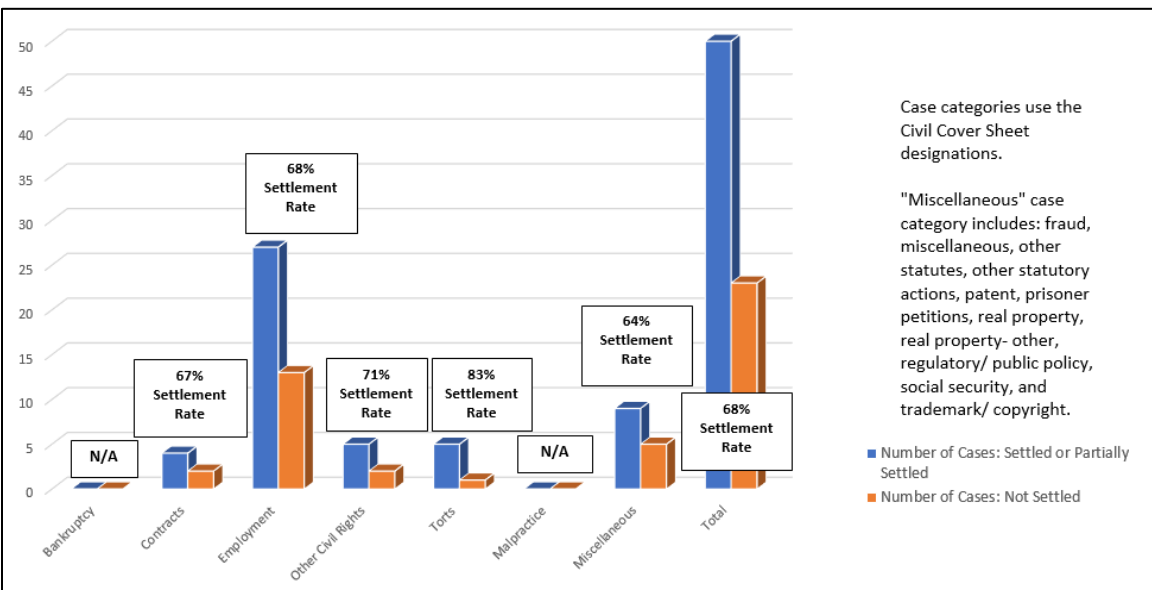
	2024	2025	2024-25 Change
Settlement rate	68%	52%	-24%

ii. Settlement rate by case type

2025

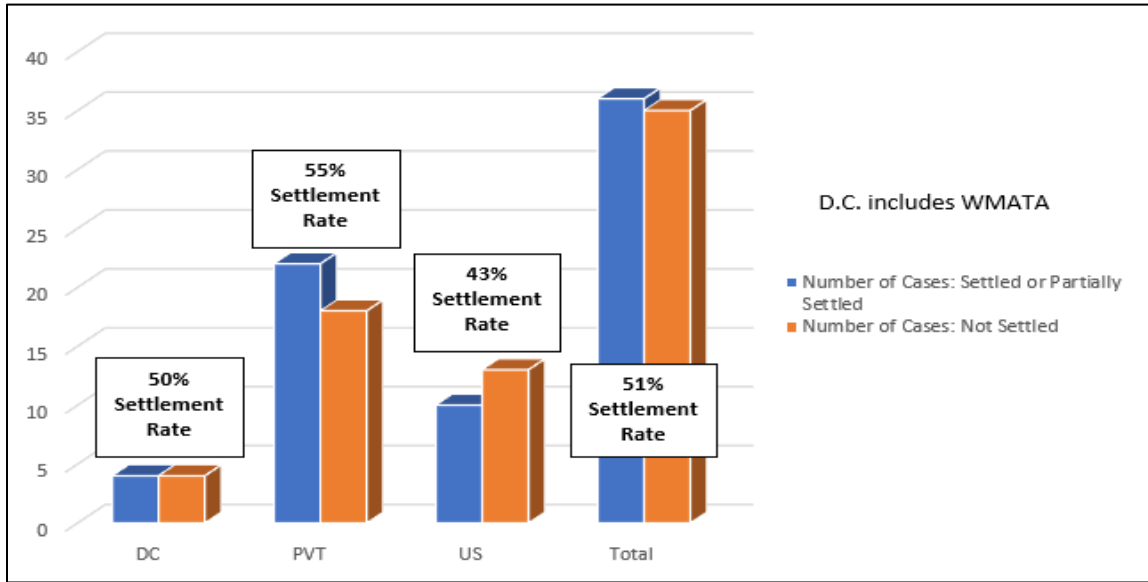


2024

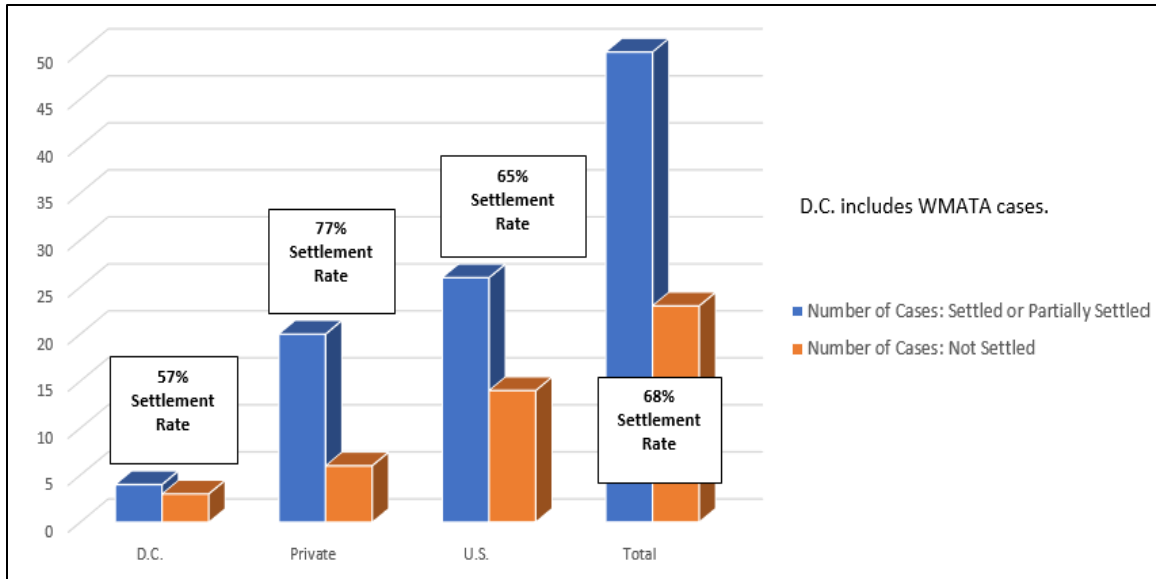


iii. Settlement rate by party type

2025



2024



iv. Examples of Settled Cases – see Appendix A.

B. BANKRUPTCY COURT

The Bankruptcy Court did not refer any adversary proceedings in 2025.

C. NEUTRAL EVALUATION

We concluded two District Court neutral evaluations in 2025. The evaluators were a partner in a prominent D.C. law firm and a mediator from our panel, both with specialized subject-matter expertise. The cases did not settle during mediation. In one of the cases, counsel and the parties reported that they found the evaluations insightful.

D. PANEL MEDIATORS

Mediations are conducted by a mediator or co-mediators selected from a panel of volunteers who are experienced lawyer-mediators. The volunteer mediators provide their services to the courts and parties pro bono. The three Circuit Mediators also mediate and co-mediate cases. Co-mediation is used to benefit the parties in complex cases, to integrate new mediators into the Program, and for quality assurance.

In 2025, 34 panel mediators completed at least one case. Thirteen mediators completed more than one mediation. The panel mediators have a vast array of experience and subject matter expertise, as illustrated in Appendix B.

Mediator Breakdown for 2025 Completed Cases		
	<u>Cases Mediated</u>	<u>Percent of Total Cases</u>
Panel Mediators	54	74%
Circuit Mediators	10	16%
Panel & Circuit Mediator Co-Mediations	7	10%

II. MEDIATION PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. MEDIATOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Program provided panel mediators optional training opportunities through regular confidential monthly sessions that are interactive and educational. Discussion topics in 2025 included: communication behaviors, overcoming resistance in negotiation, the role of emotions in mediation, reluctant mediation participants, and using brackets and contingent proposals. The sessions also covered mediation techniques and explored the mediator's real-time mediation situations and challenges.

The majority of cases entering the Program are employment matters. In 2025, we also began an employment mediation community of practice group with a subset of 29 panel mediators who have employment law expertise. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for these mediators to learn from each other, stay current on relevant developments, and hone their skills.

B. PRO BONO RECRUITMENT

Unrepresented litigants may not participate in mediation through the Program. At the request of the District Court judge and in consultation with the Court's Pro Se Unit, the Program works to identify pro bono counsel for the limited purpose of mediation. The Program placed pro bono counsel in 17 cases in 2025.

In 2025, we conducted a workshop for pro bono counsel focused on working with pro se litigants in mediation to increase the number of available pro bono counsel and enhance the working relationship between counsel and the pro se party. Seven attorneys participated in the training, three of which agreed to take cases in 2025.

C. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with Program constituents and mediation colleagues within and external to the courts provides opportunities to share the benefits of mediation, enhance the excellent reputation of the Program, and keep up with developments in the dispute resolution field. Our 2025 community engagement activities included the following:

- Presented "Negotiation Skills for Legal Assistants and Paralegals" at the D.C. Bar
- Presented "Mediation Ethics" at the 2025 FJC Workshop for Federal Court Mediators with a colleague from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri
- Presented "Brackets" at the FJC Workshop for Federal Court Mediators with a colleague from the Sixth Circuit.
- Developed and held "Representing Pro Se Parties in Mediation" attorney workshop.

D. STEPHEN J. POLLAK MEDIATOR EXCELLENCE AWARD

The Mediation Program created the Stephen J. Pollak Award Mediator Excellence award in 2025 to recognize and honor panel mediators. Beginning in 2025, Award is awarded each year to a mediator on the D.C. Circuit's pro bono mediation panel who has performed exceptional work on a case or with the Mediation Program. The 2025 and 2026 winners will receive the Award at the next D.C. Circuit Judicial & Bar Conference meeting. Thereafter, the Award will be presented at each future D.C. Circuit Judicial & Bar Conference meeting.

Stephen J. Pollak, Esq., made many contributions to the D.C. Circuit, including its courts and the Mediation Programs, for almost forty years. Mr. Pollak provided guidance and counsel to the Chief Circuit Mediators and Circuit Mediators, mentored volunteer panel mediators, and successfully mediated a varied multitude of cases. He also served as the panel mediators' liaison with the courts. The Mediator Excellence Award was established to honor his contributions to the Mediation Programs, the panel mediators, and the courts.

III. CONCLUSION

We continue to strive to meet the Program's goals by enhancing efficiency and economy for the Courts and litigants while also providing a forum for parties to consider options other than further litigation. We are grateful to the volunteer attorneys who contribute significant time and effort to the Program and Courts.

Robert Fisher, Chief Circuit Mediator
Dina Gold, Circuit Mediator
Heather Croft, Circuit Mediator
Kaitlin Heikes, Mediation Program Coordinator

For more information about the Mediation Office and Programs:

Tel. (202) 216-7350 | mediation@cadc.uscourts.gov

[Court Mediation Program](#) | [District of Columbia](#) | [United States District Court](#)

APPENDIX A
EXAMPLES OF SETTLED CASES

2025

- Attorney's Fees: 24-3529-AHA
- Civil Rights: 24-2879-RC
- Class action: 19-cv-1581-JMC
- Contract: 24-cv-2949-CRC
- Employment: 23-3167-ZMF
- Fair Credit Reporting Act: 23-3653-RC
- Personal Injury: 21-1077-APM
- Real Property: 23-3671-APM
- Wage and Hour: 25-3358-GMH

APPENDIX B

PANEL MEDIATOR AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Antitrust
- Attorney's Fees
- Aviation
- Bankruptcy
- Civil Rights
- Class Actions
- Complex Cases
- Constitutional
- Construction
- Consumer Credit
- Contract
- Corporate
- Defamation
- Education
- Employment
- Environmental
- ERISA
- False Claims Act
- FOIA / Privacy Act
- Fraud
- Insurance
- Intellectual Property
- Labor
- Law Firms
- Legal Malpractice
- Medical Malpractice
- Nonprofits
- Partnerships
- Real Property
- Regulatory & Public Policy
- RICO
- Securities
- Tax
- Torts
- Tribal
- Trusts & Estates