

## Preventing and Resolving Intergroup Conflict

The PCHR provides experienced mediators to help communities resolve conflicts and disturbances relating to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (gender), disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

“Intergroup conflicts are any disagreement between two or more individuals or groups that differ in terms of characteristics such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, or source of income, where such disagreements result in wrongful discrimination, disharmony, unlawful harassment, confrontational clashes, or even violence. The conflict may arise in the context of economic competition, struggles over political and social dominance, or disputes over ideas, beliefs, or points of view.

Intergroup conflicts may be the result of the kind of biased judgment that is appropriately labeled racism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, sexism, xenophobia, or religious tolerance, but it need not necessarily rise to that level to cause serious discord and disruption in a community.”

*- “Widening The Circle of Our Concern”  
A report from the Philadelphia Commission  
on Human Relations , 2011*

Intergroup conflicts may stand in the way of fair and respectful treatment of the members of other groups. The CRD lends its services when requested or accepted by the parties. The service uses impartial mediation practices and conflict resolution procedures to help local leaders work cooperatively in the alleviation of tensions and restore stability.

The CRD is also involved in educating the community on intergroup issues and preventing intergroup incidents from escalating to violence or negative behavior.

### Other Services

Through its Compliance Division, the PCHR investigates claims of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and the delivery of City services.

### Fair Housing Commission

The City’s Fair Housing Commission (FHC) enforces the Fair Housing Ordinance, Chapter 9-800 of the Philadelphia Code.

The FHC addresses situations in City rental properties that affect the health and safety of Tenants, resolves unfair rental practices, and facilitates positive Landlord & Tenant relationships.



## Dispute Resolution Program Mediation Services



#### Center City Office

The Curtis Center  
601 Walnut St.  
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Phila., PA 19107

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#### North Phila Office

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## Community Relations Division

The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations' Community Relations Division (CRD) deals with intergroup conflict and neighborhood disputes. Staff members provide assessment, intervention, conciliation, and follow-up services during a crisis.

The CRD operates a Dispute Resolution Program (DRP) to resolve disagreements between neighbors, and works with community leaders to prevent intergroup tension incidents (conflicts, violence or vandalism motivated by group hatred).

### What Is Mediation?

“Mediation is a process in which the parties to a dispute, with the assistance of a neutral third party (the mediator), identify the disputed issues, develop options, consider alternatives and endeavor to reach an agreement. The mediator has no advisory or determinative role in regard to the content of the dispute or the outcome of the resolution, but may advise on or determine the process of mediation whereby resolution is attempted.”

*- National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council*

## Dispute Resolution Program

The DRP services are offered to individuals, households and groups that have an ongoing relationship with each other. They are usually neighbors, but can also be business people whose shops are near each other, coworkers, or members of a religious institution or community group.

The DRP assists in resolving disputes that have not yet escalated to violence, and are not being litigated in court. The police department, District Attorney's Office and the courts refer many cases to the DRP for mediation.

A trained and experienced CRD mediator conducts formal mediation sessions to help the parties identify the nature of their conflict. Once the disputing parties reach an understanding, the mediator develops a confidential agreement that all parties sign.

### Advantages of Mediation

*Voluntary* – Mediation is a voluntary method of dispute resolution in which the parties settle their dispute with the aid of a trained mediator or co-mediator team, through effective communication, negotiation, compromise and exploration of options.

*Confidential* – All parties sign a confidential agreement to ensure that information discussed in the mediation session remains private.

*Quick* – Most mediation sessions are scheduled quickly to ensure that there is a rapid resolution of the dispute. Most disputes can be resolved in one session.

*Effective* – Statistics demonstrate that 90% of the disputes resolved through voluntary mediation leave the parties with better feelings, have longer lasting results and the agreements are more acceptable than court imposed solutions.

*Inexpensive* – Service is free of charge.

*Languages* – Staff members are fluent in several languages and are able to accommodate clients speaking any language.

### How Can I Participate?

The first step is to call 3-1-1 and request to be connected to the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. You may also contact the PCHR directly at 215- 686-4670, send an e-mail to [faqpchr@phila.gov](mailto:faqpchr@phila.gov) or send a fax to 215-686-4684.