

Delaware's Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict
(SPARC)

Mediation Program

End-of-the-Year Report
for 2014-20125

Executive Summary

The Conflict Resolution Program (CRP), within the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware, respectfully submits the following report to the Delaware Department of Education's (DOE) Exceptional Children Resources team. The information provided reflects the most current information regarding Delaware's special-education–mediation program. CRP's goal is to utilize this report, in tandem with DOE direction, to continually improve the current mediation program.

The Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict (SPARC) mediation program was formally created in 1997 to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B regulations. It has grown from a single-focus program offering mediation to parties who file due-process requests to a multi-pronged program that also offers non-due-process mediation and mediation for parents who file administrative complaints. Through these combined components, it is the aim of the SPARC project to address conflicts between parents and school districts at the lowest possible level. The services are accessed by Delaware parents and school-district personnel to resolve disputes in the area of special-education services.

During the reporting year from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015, the categorization of 35 cases for which mediation services were offered is as follows:

- Nineteen (19) due process
- Nine (9) non-due process
- Seven (7) administrative complaints

Of the 35 cases for which mediation was offered, 11 elected to participate in mediation—three were due-process (DP) cases, six were non-due process (NDP) cases, and two were administrative-complaint (AC) cases. Of the 11 cases mediated, ten reached agreement, which is a 91% success rate.

Mediation participants are given evaluation questionnaires at the end of their meetings to ascertain their feedback on the intake process, mediator, agreement reached, and the overall experience. The 2014–2015 Summary of Mediation-Evaluation Results, outlined on page 13 and shown in more detail on pages 26-31, indicates that, overall, mediation participants were *very satisfied* with the services they received through the SPARC mediation program and would contact IPA's Conflict Resolution Program for mediation services should the need arise in the future.