



For Immediate Release

Contact: Michele White
62-B District Court, 616.554.0715
or
Lisa Taylor
City of Kentwood, 616.401.5137

**62-B District Court of Kentwood Launches
Alternative Dispute Resolution Plan**
*ADR Plan Allows Civil Disputes to be Resolved Outside the Courtroom,
Saving Clients Time and Money, Preserving Relationships*

Kentwood, Michigan, July 6, 2021 – The City of Kentwood’s 62-B District Court has implemented an Alternative Dispute Resolution plan that will allow community members to resolve certain disputes outside the courtroom through mediation and other facilitated processes.

The court implemented its Alternative Dispute Resolution, or ADR, plan to reduce client costs, produce more timely resolutions and increase satisfaction with the justice system. The plan lays out a process for determining which cases are appropriate for mediation and how mediators are appointed.

Mediation involves a trained third-party individual who works with litigants to resolve disagreements outside the courtroom and reach a mutually acceptable resolution. Mediation is often scheduled and completed quicker than court cases and does not require litigants to pay attorney fees.

“Court cases involve a significant financial and emotional investment,” 62-B District Court Judge Amanda Sterkenburg said. “I am proud the 62-B District Court is offering this plan as a way to save time and money for those seeking resolution, preserve relationships and help each party walk away more satisfied.

“Another beneficial aspect of ADR is each party gets the opportunity to have their voice heard in a safe and neutral environment. Being able to express themselves empowers the parties to work past the conflict and seek resolution.”

In collaboration with the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, mediation is now a routine part of the 62-B District Court pre-trial process and offers individuals a low-cost option for trained and certified mediation.

If a case is referred for mediation, the court’s ADR clerk will send a letter to the parties to let them know they can use the Dispute Resolution Center or select a private mediator by agreement. A dedicated ADR clerk will work with the parties to ensure they understand the process, connect with the mediator and follow up to ensure mediation is completed.

Mediation also helps minimize disparities in power, where one party may be represented by counsel, but the other party is not. Mediators are specifically trained in these nuances to make sure the balance of power is fair when parties are negotiating and bargaining. Mediation can preserve or restore relationships by overcoming misunderstandings and improving communication between parties.

The ADR plan was designed to be used in conjunction with facilitators who understand how diversity may affect a dispute and use processes that are designed to overcome barriers to find common ground.

“The best ADR outcomes are reached when varying perspectives are taken into consideration,” Sterkenburg said. “The 62-B District Court remains committed to acknowledging diverse cultures, values and socioeconomic statuses within disputes. We see each perspective in the room as equally valid and we use well-trained mediators and interpreters to reach optimal resolutions.”

Parties are encouraged to pursue any form of ADR if they believe it will assist them in resolving the dispute. The court intends to refer appropriate summary proceedings and civil cases such as breach of contract, property disputes and debt collection to mediation. Sterkenburg will oversee the implementation of the new plan and the mediator selection process.

While mediation is not a new form of resolution, it has become more common over the past decade due to changes in Michigan court rules that require enhanced legal training for mediators and give courts the ability to implement their own ADR plans.

Mediation was previously available for the 62-B District Court’s small claims cases in partnership with the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan. With the ADR plan now in place, mediation is even more accessible, so disputes can be resolved in the most efficient way and with the most satisfaction.

The court is accepting applications for mediators. Applications are available on the [State Court Administrative Office website](#) and may be submitted to 62-B District Court ADR Clerk Lakeshia Gilbert at gilbertl@kentwood.us.

To read the full ADR plan, visit kentwood.us/ADR. For additional information, contact Court Administrator Michele White at 616.554.0715 or whitem@kentwood.us.

###