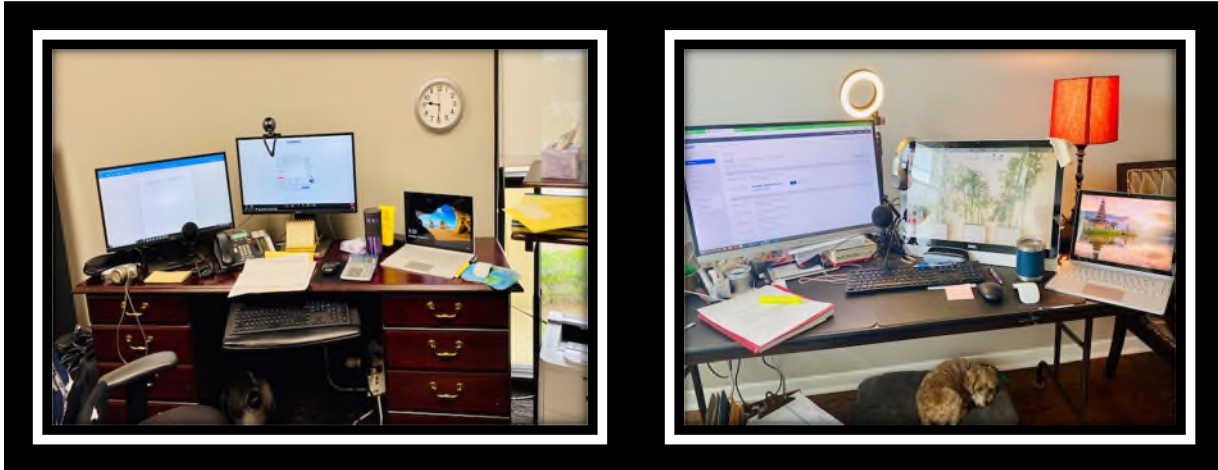


Kudos to the ADR Program in the 14th Circuit. Whether it is working from home or working in the office, the ADR program keeps the wheels of justice turning by innovating the way they mediate by transitioning all mediations over to Zoom. The only difference between their home office and work office may be the furry members of their families that keep them company.



When the staff was forced to work from home in March, everyone got busy trying to master Zoom with more practice sessions than we could count – with staff, contract mediators, and eventually a few volunteer county mediators. Family Law was the first area to try Zoom. Holding our breath, we dove in and have never looked back. It's working out well. At first, attorneys were very reluctant, but now they like Zoom because they do not have to leave their offices, thus saving them time and money. For their clients, they can attend virtually from their homes or offices, saving them time and reducing their time away from work. The breakout room feature is a huge bonus with Zoom. It truly is the selling point in marketing Zoom for mediation purposes. Breakout rooms allow the mediator to have private conversations with each side, with only the attorneys, and when the mediator is in one breakout room, the attorney and their client in the other breakout room can continue speaking in private.

Shortly after family law, we turned our attention to dependency mediation. Typically there are between 6-10 individuals that attend dependency mediation. The Zoom platform is perfect for large meetings. Prior to the Covid-19 shutdown, we would have staff present in court when large dockets were held so that we could schedule dependency mediations in court. Coordination of these mediations outside of court can be burdensome due to the number of participants. Now, we have Zoom scheduling meetings with all attorneys a few days prior to court. When court is held a few days later, the mediation date can simply be announced without the added confusion of trying to coordinate in court on Zoom.

Next was county mediation. County was special in that it needs a lot of planning to execute properly. There are typically large dockets held on a weekly basis that require in person mediations conducted by a mostly volunteer group of mediators. After Covid, staff has tackled all cases that were already set on dockets through June by noticing those individual cases for Zoom mediations. Clerks were advised to cease putting cases on Pre-trial dockets and instead a new Administrative Order was entered. The new AO was served with all complaints and stated all cases would be noticed for a virtual (Zoom) small claims mediation and not appear on a pre-trial docket. Today, we are noticing cases when we have proof of service in the file. Staff and a few volunteer mediators notice and mediate all county mediations.

Last, but most important, the staff. Without our incredible staff that includes, Sonja Marks, Lynn Wimberly, and Tori Roland, along with David Holland who was on loan from family law, we could not be

where we are today with our ADR programs. They were committed from the beginning in making this transition a success. Zoom won us over and we aren't looking back!

Thank you to all the judges we serve through the ADR program for allowing us be innovative and creative in coming up with a way to keep things moving.

OUR TEAM:

Carol A. Dunaway, M.S.

ADR Director
Florida Supreme Court Mediator
Certified in County, Family, Dependency

Sonja Marks, M.S.

Mediation Services Coordinator
Florida Supreme Court Mediator
Certified in County and Family

Lynn Wimberly, M.S.

Mediation Services Coordinator
Florida Supreme Court
Certified in County, Family and Dependency

Tori Roland

Program Assistant

David Holland

Family Court Manager
Florida Supreme Court
Certified in County and Family