

Conciliation Service



MCC

*A Christian
resource
for meeting
human
need*

Philosophy of Training and Certification Mennonite Conciliation Service

ROUGH DRAFT - PLEASE OFFER YOUR SUGGESTIONS AND CRITICISMS

I. Background

Two paradoxes lie at the heart of the training and certifying philosophy of Mennonite Conciliation Service:

1) Peacemaking is the duty of every person and at the same time the calling of a specially gifted few. On the one hand, every person is responsible to develop skills for building peace in his or her immediate world. There are no "experts," only fellow travellers responding to alienation with the best of their ability.

At the same time, the depth of alienation existing in our world calls for supporting specially gifted peacemakers who possess a depth of commitment and skill impossible to develop in every person.

MCS training is designed to empower every person as peacemaker and also to recognize and equip those who are specially gifted in this calling.

2) Peacemaking is something that everyone knows a great deal about, and it would be presumptuous to believe that one can "teach" others how to make peace in their own lives. At the same time, the average person is uninformed about specific responses for resolving conflict, and benefits enormously from opportunity to reflect on and practice peacemaking skills.

Simply by being active members of the human family all of us know a great deal, often much more than we realize, about the rudimentary skills of peacemaking. All of us know something about fair play, listening, de-escalating anger, formulating proposals, maximizing benefits, forgiving and forgetting. Even those of us who are most accustomed to silencing others, escalating anger and imposing demands know instinctively how to accomplish these negative strategies. Thus, if we choose, we can readily identify our own behaviors and thus learn what builds peace and what destroys peace.

Learning to be an effective peacemaker, then, is not so much a matter of learning completely new things. Rather, it is learning to know ourselves, becoming conscious of the vast knowledge and powerful skills that lie within us. When we know ourselves, we can strengthen and discipline those skills and awarenesses effective in building peace.

The MCS training and certifying process is designed in levels to acknowledge these paradoxes.

II. Training for Mediation in Inter-Personal Settings

Several levels of training are offered. First level or "Basic Mediation Skills Training" is designed to acquaint participants with mediation skills useful in any setting of disagreement. Basic listening, clarifying, problem-solving, and negotiation skills are taught, and opportunity provided to practice their use in roleplay settings. This basic seminar is relatively brief, 15 hours, and focuses primarily on introducing basic concepts and skills. It does not provide individualized expert feedback to participants

How often 11

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about their personal effectiveness as mediators. The purpose is to introduce the average layperson to basic skills useful in any setting, not to produce skilled mediators.

Second Level or "Advanced Mediation Training" is designed for individuals seeking further personal skills or recognition as an accredited mediator in the MCS network. Training at this level consists of 15 hours of training, under the personal supervision of an experienced mediator recognized by MCS. Normally, this training would consist of participation in eight roleplays personally observed by an experienced trainer, participating four times in the role of mediator and four times as disputing party. Working as a co-mediator with an experienced mediator in 15 hours of actual mediation may also serve as a substitute for completing this level of training.

The third level of training is "Internship," involving an additional 15 hours of mediation in actual conflict under the supervision of an experienced MCS mediator. This may be done by serving in a co-mediator role or by serving as a sole mediator. The intern would need to spend a minimum of one hour for each hour of actual mediation reflecting on the mediation experience with an experienced MCS mediator.

Upon satisfactory completion of all three levels, individuals are recognized as accredited mediators in inter-personal settings by MCS.

III. Mediation in Group Settings

Mediators recognized by MCS as qualified for mediation in group settings must complete two additional levels of training beyond the above. These consist of participation in a 15-hour training experience introducing tools of group conflict management. Topics covered include: Use of visuals and public recording; fishbowl and group spectrum as discussion and decision-making vehicles; techniques for structuring group dialogue; entry issues; tools for reporting, feedback, and group evaluation; goal-setting devices; use of small groups as an intervention and consensus-building tool; tools for personnel evaluation in organizations, etc. Proficiency in all areas is not expected, but training aims to introduce issues in each of these areas and identify resources for the intervenor.

The second level consists of a 15-hour supervised internship in actual group conflict settings with an experienced group mediator. Ideally this will consist of serving as a team member with an experienced MCS mediator. Where this is difficult to arrange, the supervised internship may also be conducted by regular consultation before, during and after involvement of the student with an experienced mediator in a current group conflict.

IV. Grandparent Provision

In instituting these levels of training and certifying, MCS is providing a "grandparent" provision to recognize the numerous individuals active in our network who already possess the skills this training process is designed to build. We invite members currently active in our network who wish to be recognized as an accredited mediator to contact us and inform us as to which level they believe their own existing training and experience indicates. The MCS Central Office will review these applications case-by-case.

--Ron Kraybill
MCS Director
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