



## *Recruiting Mediator Volunteers*

The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is recruiting experienced mediators statewide to volunteer to mediate civil rights complaints filed for investigation with the Department. The largest state civil rights agency in the country, in 2021, CRD answered 65,502 calls from the public alleging violations of the laws we enforce, including the Fair Employment and Housing Act, Unruh Civil Rights Act (public accommodations), Disabled Persons Act, Ralph Civil Rights Act (hate violence), California Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and Government Code section 11135, which prohibits discrimination in all government-funded activities and programs.

CRD has provided mediation services in some form since the late 1990s, but it was not until 2012 that our Dispute Resolution Division (DRD) was formally recognized in statute. The Department now employs a staff of experienced neutrals whose exclusive role is to facilitate formal mediation of complaints. Since its inception, DRD has steadily increased the number of cases it mediates each year, negotiating 402 settlements resulting in over \$8 million in monetary recovery in 2021; each DRD settlement also provided for broader affirmative relief such as anti-discrimination training. Indeed, all DRD-mediated settlement agreements include “affirmative relief” as defined in Government Code section 12926(a), including the development of policies or practices designed to prevent future discrimination or harassment.

Many of the cases coming through the Division involve potentially serious liability and damages, regarding discrimination matters familiar to California litigators. A large number involve conflicts that are unlikely ever to land on a private lawyer’s desk. These include disputes where there is an ongoing employment or housing relationship that has been harmed by perceived bias or unfairness. Whether or not a legal violation could be ultimately found, many of these cases can be resolved through sensitive negotiation that preserves jobs, homes, and relationships. DRD is a place parties can find mutually beneficial resolutions.

But with just 15 full-time and part-time DRD mediators total, there are far more cases where parties request mediation than we can assist. At the same time, there are experienced attorneys throughout the state, skilled in dispute resolution, who are committed to bringing their training to bear in resolving disputes in their communities. For that reason, we are welcoming applications to volunteer to mediate complaints filed with CRD statewide.

Applications should be submitted by mail to Lisa Zeltner, Dispute Resolution Division Manager, California Civil Rights Department, 2218 Kausen Blvd., Suite 100, Elk Grove, CA 95758 or by email to [Lisa.Zeltner@DFEH.ca.gov](mailto:Lisa.Zeltner@DFEH.ca.gov) or [DRDOnlineRequests@CalCivilRights.ca.gov](mailto:DRDOnlineRequests@CalCivilRights.ca.gov). Applications will be screened on a rolling basis and the most qualified candidates will be interviewed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Kish", is written over a horizontal line.

Kevin Kish  
Director of the California Civil Rights Department