

IMCR offers free mediation services to Co-op City residents

The Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution (IMCR) offers its services free of charge to the residents of Co-op City both on- and offsite and by appointment only.

There are day and evening availability.

IMCR established the first Community Dispute Resolution Center in New York City in 1975 to examine whether certain cases of a criminal nature could be more effectively handled and resolved by diverting them from the normal court litigation process to local panels of community volunteer mediators who include attorneys and professionals with experience in alternative dispute settings.

“Even the best of neighbors may at times have disputes,” said Michael Munns, senior attorney, Riverbay Legal Department. “When you can’t resolve those problems yourself, IMCR offers free mediation service. In most cases, the IMCR mediator is able to guide the parties to a satisfactory solution, even though I should point out that the mediator has no authority to order any person to do anything that they do not want to do. Cooperators are, however, fortunate that IMCR Mediation Service is available free for those who would like to utilize the service. It’s one of the best kept secrets of Co-op City.”

IMCR facilitates resolution of minor criminal allegations and civil disputes which are typically referred by the police, the DA’s office, and other local agencies. Here at Riverbay, CSO personnel also refer cooperators to the center for resolution of neighbor-to-neighbor disputes, family peers and consumer disputes.

In addition, IMCR handles conflicts in several other areas, for instance, aggravated assault, aggravated harassment, animal complaint, assault, breach of contract, burglary, visitation, criminal mischief, criminal trespass, harassment, housing dispute, menacing, petit larceny, theft of services, and many others.

The center offers sessions on truancy, falling behind in school, communicating with a substitute, distribution of household chores, running

away, early sexual activity, inappropriate friends and curfew negotiations as well as discussing parental fears.

According to Titus Rich, Jr., director of Mediation at IMCR: “Quite often when people have conflicts, they may not be comfortable talking to each other, but when they come to mediation, they will oftentimes open up and say things that if they did normally, they would probably end up in a fight about. In mediation when they are clear about their thoughts, they are able to express those thoughts and that gives the other party the opportunity to know what and how the other is thinking.”

Mr. Rich explained there are no judges or lawyers at the mediation sessions, only the IMCR assigned mediator and the parties involved sitting down in a safe, neutral place which makes it a bit easier for them to open up and express their thoughts and feelings. This is especially important for children, he said, who, in the neutral setting of mediation, may feel comfortable enough to openly express to their parents, grandparents or any other person, what they do not feel they can say when they are home.

Mr. Rich added that IMCR has been involved with a lot of youth related disputes to help curb youth violence all across the Bronx for many years.

In addition to parties being referred to IMCR’s services, IMCR also reaches out to those who may have been referred to the agency as possibly needing their conflict resolution services.

IMCR’s mediators are on call on a consistent basis. They act as impartial “referees” during the mediation sessions, and all information and conversations are confidential.

Resolution can result in no agreement, or verbal or written agreement, which both parties sign and agree to although the mediators cannot demand that an agreement is signed since this is a voluntary process.

Whatever the outcome, IMCR reports the status of the session to Riverbay’s Legal Department, and no pertinent details of those discussions are divulged.

IMCR’s mission is to promote peaceful human relations by offering mediation and conflict resolution services and training in non-violent principles and skills which empower individuals to respond constructively to conflict.

Co-op City shareholders may contact IMCR at (718) 585-1190 for an appointment.

“We believe this is a very good tool that anybody can use to deal with everyday issues when conflict arises,” said Mr. Rich. “It is a way for people to resolve outstanding issues so they can go back to their normal lives.”