

What is Cooperative Dispute Resolution?

Cooperative Dispute Resolution (“CDR”) is a confidential dispute resolution process to help parties settle their domestic relations disputes. Cooperative Dispute Resolution provides a neutral forum for parties and their attorneys to discuss the disputes in their case and receive a balanced and unbiased impression or opinion of the case. This opinion can assist parties in examining their case and exploring settlement opportunities.

During the CDR session the Assessor will oversee the discussion to allow each party and their attorney the opportunity to be heard in an atmosphere of cooperation and respect.

In a nutshell, CDR helps parties understand what to reasonably expect if they had a trial in Warren County Domestic Relations Court. Having reasonable expectations helps parties reach an early settlement before incurring the major financial and emotional costs of extended litigation.

Who is the CDR Assessor?

Currently, Chief Magistrate Renee L. Crist and Magistrate Kyra M. Raimey are the CDR Assessors. Chief Magistrate Crist practiced family law for 15 years prior to taking the bench in 2017. Magistrate Raimey has practiced family law for 20 years. Both Magistrates have extensive experience managing family law disputes and have been trained as family law mediators.

How does the process begin?

The assigned Judge or Magistrate will discuss CDR with the parties and/or their attorneys. If the Judge or Magistrate decides to send the case to CDR, an Order will be issued providing the day and time of the CDR session.

The CDR Order will also list the type of disputes to be assessed: Parenting, Asset/Debt and/or Spousal Support. Generally, CDR takes 3 hours. A scheduling conference after CDR will also be scheduled for the attorneys and/or the parties to tell the assigned Judge or Magistrate if any agreements were reached during CDR.

Briefs/Intake Forms

In order to help the Assessor prepare for the CDR session, both parties will submit briefs to the Assessor and to the other party and/or attorney. Briefs must be delivered to the Assessor, other party and/or attorney at least 14 days before the scheduled CDR session. Fines may be assessed for late submission or failure to submit briefs. These briefs will not be filed with the Clerk of Courts. The Assessor will shred the briefs upon the completion of the CDR process. The format for each of the briefs is available on the Court’s website in the document center.

What are the advantages of CDR?

1. **Children:** CDR benefits children by helping their parents quickly resolve their conflict. When parents are in conflict over their children’s living arrangements or parenting time, children suffer emotionally. The sooner contested court cases are completed, the sooner children can begin to regain a sense of stability.
2. **Families Know Best:** CDR helps parents to reach a settlement rather than having the court decide for them what is best for their family.
3. **Time:** CDR provides the parties a chance to settle their dispute quickly, allowing the family to begin the process of moving forward.
4. **Cost:** Family Court disputes can be lengthy and expensive. Parties who are able to reach an agreement early in the process may save legal fees and other costs such as psychological evaluations.



What happens during CDR?

At the beginning of the CDR session, the Assessor will fully explain the CDR process and ground rules. Each party will then have an opportunity to explain what disputes are at issue and his/her perspective on the solution to the issues. Attorneys will be given a brief opportunity to supplement their client's perspective. The Assessor may ask questions of either party and/or the attorneys.

After a short break, the Assessor will provide an advisory opinion of the probable outcome of the case if the case were to go to trial in Warren County Domestic Relations Court. Parties will then meet privately with their attorneys to discuss the advisory opinion. Both parties and their attorneys will then come together with the Assessor to explore settlement proposals.