



International Mediation Institute

PROFESSIONAL MEDIATION WORLDWIDE  
Promoting Consensus and Access to Justice  
[www.IMImediation.org](http://www.IMImediation.org)

## Maryland Council for Dispute Resolution (MCDR)

*IMI QUALIFYING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM*

Associated documents:

- [MCDR QAP Applicants Self-statement](#)
- [MCDR QAP Topics covered in reference forms](#)
- [MCDR QAP Training Documentation Requirements](#)

### Introduction & Background

The Maryland Council for Dispute Resolution (MCDR) has offered certification of mediators since 1996, relying on Performance Based Assessments. MCDR was one of the first organizations in the United States to establish performance based criteria for mediators. Its program is considered a national model in the ongoing dialogue on quality assurance and mediator credentials. MCDR is now applying its solid experience within the IMI process, enabling candidates to become MCDR certified as well as qualified for IMI Certification.

MCDR's Performance Based Assessment requires candidates to demonstrate competency within nine different areas of the mediation process, including ethics. MCDR's peer review occurs in a "lab" setting in which candidates demonstrate their skills in a live roleplay mediation before two highly seasoned assessors. The assessors provide oral and written feedback to the candidates; both assessors must award a passing score to permit certification.

Not only must candidates perform satisfactorily on the Performance Based Assessment, they must meet other criteria, including having sufficient mediation experience and training. Candidates are required to submit an application form, two references, documentation of mediation training, and their agreement to follow mediator ethics. Detailed information on qualification through MCDR for IMI Certification is set forth in the seven sections below.

Additional information about MCDR is available at [www.mcdr.org](http://www.mcdr.org). If interested in becoming qualified through MCDR for IMI Certification, please review the information below and then contact MCDR for an application form and additional information by emailing Rob Ketcham at [rcketcham@goeaston.net](mailto:rcketcham@goeaston.net), Lindsay Barranco at [lbarranco@comcast.net](mailto:lbarranco@comcast.net), or Ramona Buck at [ramonabuck@gmail.com](mailto:ramonabuck@gmail.com).

## 1. Mediator Experience

*Candidates must demonstrate a substantial level of experience as a mediator, based on clearly identified criteria.*

MCDR's experience shows that mediators need to have a firm grasp of mediation through extensive experience and study in order to be qualified. MCDR's application form asks for how many mediations the candidate has mediated. MCDR requires that candidates have been mediating for at least one year. In line with the IMI requirements, MCDR requires 200 hours of mediation, with completion of at least 20 cases, prior to qualification for IMI Certification.

## 2. Mediation Knowledge

*Candidates must demonstrate a strong understanding of general mediation theory and practice.*

Prior to the Performance Based Assessment, MCDR requires each candidate to submit a self-statement, two detailed mediation references, and documentation of mediation training:

- a) A candidate's self-statement should indicate the candidate's understanding of mediation theory and his or her own mediation philosophy. The directions for a candidate's self-statement are linked above.
- b) Candidates must submit forms from two references familiar with their work, such as co-mediators, trainers, or mentors. The topics covered in the reference forms are linked above.
- c) Candidates must provide documentation of their mediation trainings; 40 hours is the minimum training required. The training documentation required is linked above.

### 3. Mediator Skills

*MCDR evaluates candidates' performance in terms of the occurrence and effectiveness of mediation process and mediation techniques, against high competency benchmarks. MCDR's Evaluations/Assessments are based on roleplays, following self-statements by the candidates.*

MCDR's Performance Based Assessment involves a roleplay mediation on a topic chosen by the candidate from several possible scenarios, including a divorce/custody situation, a workplace conflict, and a community dispute. The candidate conducts a one-hour mediation while being observed by two trained assessors. The roleplay is videoed for later review. The assessors use the candidates' previously submitted self-statements to help the candidates compare how they actually practice with how they intend to practice. At the conclusion of the roleplay, the candidate is offered oral feedback from the roleplayers which is followed by feedback from the assessors. The candidate subsequently receives written comments and a scoring sheet from each assessor and a copy of the roleplay video for future review and reflection. Assessors ground their assessments in the scoring tool developed first by FMC in Canada and refined by MCDR over the past 15 years.

That scoring tool evaluates candidates in nine different categories, set forth below. A score of 1 to 5 is given in each category. While an average rating of 3 is required to pass the assessment, the third and seventh categories (Power/Participation and Ethics) are so critical that a candidate must receive a rating of at least 3 in each of those areas in order to pass.

1. Trusting Relationship: Establishes and maintains a respectful trusting relationship with the participants. Does the mediator form an effective relationship with the participants?
2. Cooperation, Mutual Understanding: Facilitates a collaborative relationship between the participants. Does the mediator promote participants' co-operative efforts and mutual understanding?
3. Power, Participation: Manages power imbalances. Does the mediator facilitate opportunities for full participation?
4. Interests: Attends to and explores participants' interests. Does the mediator assist participants to identify underlying interests?
5. Manages Conflict: Manages conflict appropriately. Does the mediator assist the participants to engage productively?
6. Adapts Process: Evaluates ongoing process. Does the mediator monitor and work with participants to continually adapt the process?
7. Ethical, Professional: Conducts the mediation ethically. Does the mediator work with the participants in a professional manner?
8. Manages Information: Assists participants to identify and manage information. Does the mediator provide a framework to gather and track information?

9. Options, Interest-Based Solutions: Assists participants to apply interest-based solutions. Does the mediator assist the participants to generate options and apply interest based solutions?

#### 4. Program Transparency

*The benchmarks and criteria applied by MCDR in assessment are accessible on its website, [click here](#), and are discussed in the section immediately above.*

#### 5. Program Integrity

*MCDR's assessors have substantial experience assessing the performance of mediators.*

MCDR assessors are mediators who have themselves successfully completed the MCDR certification process in addition to specific substantive training to serve as assessors. MCDR designed and conducts a 16-hour training program for assessors. The training includes understanding the assessment tool; practice using the assessment tool; understanding how to give oral and written feedback; and ensuring that each assessor's scoring is substantially the same. Each assessor must pass a test designed specifically for assessors which involves assessing a videoed mediation session, arriving at the appropriate score in assessing the session, and giving suitable oral and written feedback.

#### 6. Ongoing Monitoring of Program

*MCDR incorporates processes for the ongoing monitoring of the performance and practice of its assessors and will interface closely with IMI to maintain a sustainable quality control system.*

#### 7. Commitment to Diversity

*MCDR's assessment process is available on an equal basis to experienced mediators regardless of their professional affiliations, gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation or other personal characterizations.*