

Family Magistrate Theresa A. Furnari (Ret.) has either practiced, taught, or advanced the use of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process her entire professional career. For 19 years until her retirement in 2021 from the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, she adjudicated cases of divorce, child support, custody, visitation, alimony, contempt, temporary protective orders and emergency relief. While on the bench, she utilized mediation skills. During scheduling conferences, she co-created and monitored Maryland's first program offering limited representation for pro se litigants during mediation sessions with the University of Baltimore Mediation Clinic. On the order of then Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Theresa was appointed to serve on the Judicial Council's Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee. After successfully completing a Collaborative Law Training, she monitored a successful pilot project introducing the use of collaboration to pro se litigants. In 2016, she was recognized by Maryland Collaborative Practice Council for the Collaborative Project of Maryland for this groundbreaking pilot project. In 2012 she was recognized by the ADR Section of the Maryland State Bar Association for her efforts and involvement in advancing the interests of ADR in the State of Maryland. She continued to refresh her ADR skills by participating in trainings in mediation collaborative law, and conflict resolution skills.

Theresa presented to a variety of organizations, including the Baltimore Women's Bar Association, the University of Baltimore School of Law, University of Maryland School of Social Work, National Business Institute, The Serjeants Inn, the Bar Association of Baltimore City, Baltimore and Carroll County, Maryland Association For Justice, Administrative Office of the Courts, Alternative Dispute Resolution & Child Abuse and Neglect Conference, Maryland Mediators Convention, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, Maryland Joint Child Support Council Annual Conference and Training Seminars for Masters. She was president of the Baltimore Women's Bar Association, and the ADR Committee of the Baltimore City Bar.

Prior to her appointment to the Circuit Court, Theresa had a successful private practice. She focused primarily on domestic cases but gradually moved toward an alternative dispute practice after completing the necessary training. In 1998, she was appointed to the Court Administration Committee of the Maryland Alternative Dispute Resolution Dispute Resolution Commission, to propose recommendations for use of ADR in the courts. She mediated domestic, contract, workers compensation, employment, and neighborhood disputes, landlord tenant, criminal and small claims. in Circuit Courts and District Courts, the Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, Inc., the World Bank, U.S. Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Community Mediation Program.

Prior to setting up her own practice she worked as a contract attorney with the Baltimore City Department and then as a partner with the Child Advocacy Group in Child In Need of Assistance proceedings. She began her legal career as a tax and litigation associate with Venable. There she was a member of the Domestic Violence Taskforce of the Public Justice Center that produced the award-winning documentary about Battered Women, "A Plea for Justice".

Theresa has taught classes in mediation skills and family law practice at University of Baltimore School of Law. She co-taught skills-based mediation regarding martial property and child support issues with the Sheppard Pratt Health Services, Inc., Family Mediation Services. And co-taught mediation skill-based training to attorneys in Allegany County, Maryland and Mediation Training

Seminar for the United States Army Europe, West Germany. Lastly, Theresa evaluated mediation simulation sessions for participants in mediation courses offered by MICPEL.

Theresa is a graduate of Tulane School of Law in New Orleans, Louisiana and a former Peace Corp Volunteer who served in Liberia, West Africa. She volunteers at the Just Advice Legal Clinic and is a Board member for Blue Water Baltimore. She is active in her community and church, During her free time, she enjoys traveling, long distance cycling and gardening.