



Mediation in Rent Court

The Baltimore City District Court piloted a rent court mediation program from April to September 2016. Here are the highlights of that highly successful pilot.

81% Settlement Rate

85% of the landlords and tenants who were referred to mediation took part in the pilot. Of those who took part, **81% reached agreement**.

Praise for Mediation

Landlords and tenants **both** reported positive mediation experiences.

- **83% felt heard** by the other side.
- **92% had enough time** to say what they wanted to say.
- **88% discussed all of the issues** that brought them to court.
- **81% did not feel pressured** to reach an agreement.
- **86% would suggest the ADR process** to others.
- **89% of participants were satisfied** with the mediation.
- **85% are glad the ADR services are available**.

Failure-to-pay rent cases have the **second highest settlement rate** in mediation of all civil case types in District Court.

Why Offer Mediation?

Recent research sponsored by the Maryland Judiciary concluded that participants in District Court alternative dispute resolution (ADR) were more likely to report that they could **express their thoughts and their concerns**; all of the **underlying issues came out**; and, the issues were resolved. Additionally, participants who reached an agreement in ADR were **more likely to be satisfied with the judicial system** than those who did not engage in ADR. These findings encouraged the Court and the ADR Office to explore expanding mediation services in Baltimore City to improve the rent court experience.

Why Rent Court?

Mediation can address issues that are not addressed in rent court. For example, in summary eviction proceedings, issues before the court are limited to whether rent is due and owing and, if so, how much. An adverse decision for a tenant, such as a default or consent judgment, can lead to eviction and can damage credit history and affect rental applications. On the other hand, a judgment in favor of a landlord does not resolve habitually late payments or general communication challenges.

The District Court of Maryland continually strives to provide the most positive litigant experience for all who use the court. The success of the rent court pilot mediation program illustrates the value and benefits of dedicating mediation resources to failure-to-pay rent cases in the District Court of Maryland in Baltimore City.

Information gathered from the *Report on the 2016 Rent Court ADR Pilot for The District Court of Maryland in Baltimore City*, which was prepared by the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law (C-DRUM) and funded by a Conflict Resolution Project Grant from the Maryland Judiciary Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO).

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