

A Year of Learning from Pandemic Conflict

The Quarantine Conflict Resolution Service launched 1 year ago

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mediate BC's Quarantine Conflict Resolution Service turns one year old on Wednesday March 24, 2021. Originally expected to run for six weeks, the Service has been extended to September 2021. Like everyone else, our mediators have been surprised by the ongoing challenges created by the pandemic.

In March of 2020, Amanda Semenoff joined Sharon Sutherland and Mediate BC to create a conflict resolution response to Covid-19. Having heard so many stories from friends in Europe and Asia about lockdown roommate conflicts, they were trying to get ahead of the expected conflicts. These conflicts were very different **[from what?]**.

- 40% co-parenting issues
- 40% housing
- 20% small business and non-profits

But the statistics don't tell the whole story. The entire first wave of calls was from separated or divorced parents trying to figure out how to handle their kids and work when their co-parenting plans, often court-ordered, had not anticipated anything like stay-at-home orders -- so many co-parenting plans used school or other community spaces as a bridge for moving their kids between homes. Families that could not work from home struggled to figure out who should reduce work hours to care for kids. Reduced wages impacted parents' ability to pay child support.

Housing conflicts have mirrored where we are in the pandemic. The first set of calls were from landlords whose tenants stopped paying rent and stopped responding to them. Then we started hearing from roommates and neighbours about challenges around noise, shared space and shared internet. Now the majority of our calls are coming from tenants wanting support in talking to their landlords.

Businesses and non-profits have used the program primarily for two types of disputes: conflicts between owners around how to handle a dramatic drop in revenue and possibly shutting down, and conflicts between staff and managers or among staff members about how to follow Covid protocols.

As vaccinations are rolled out to the broader community, new conflicts are expected to arise from how we return to in-person work, including issues around vaccinations, masking and the easing of Covid protocols.

Quarantine Conflict Resolution Service (QCRS)

<https://www.mediatebc.com/resolving-other-disputes/quarantine>

Quotes

Families have been so impacted and it's taken every bit of resiliency they could muster to be able to rise to the challenge. Being creative, learning new skills, doing more with less. So many families have done well and weathered this storm. But vulnerable families who were already stressed and stretched have been really struggling. They lost access to resources and supports they were depending on and became more isolated and vulnerable. Vulnerable families are going to need more time and support to recover.

- Kat Bellamano, Mediator, Ambitus Consulting - Victoria, BC

The calls I received high-lighted the pattern of vulnerability laid bare by the pandemic in so many ways. People called with no idea what mediation was, just hoping someone could help them.

- Amanda Semenoff, Program Manager, Mediate BC - New Westminster, BC

We are so grateful to have had over 40 mediators from around the province volunteer their time to support their communities through resolving the conflicts that are so fundamental to our daily lives and just getting through the pandemic. I'm proud to see that our conflict resolution community has stepped up and has continued to do so, often pro bono. All this while also trying to pivot their own mediation practices to a virtual model that still seeks to ensure participant safety.

- Ann Lee, Director of Operations, Mediate BC - New Westminster, BC

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