SPECIAL EDUCATION MEDIATOR LIST

(December 2023)

Special education mediations are conducted by impartial private practice attorneys who meet the standards outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and additional standards set by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Below are the names of the current mediators under contract with TEA and descriptions of their professional experience.

MEDIATOR	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Jill McCarthy Arntz	Jill McCarthy Arntz received her law degree from South Texas College of Law. Ms. Arntz's practice, Arntz Law Firm, primarily includes private mediations and arbitrations, as well as mediations and arbitrations for government agencies both in Texas and in other states. In addition to special education mediations, Ms. Arntz mediates estate, family, insurance, civil and commercial disputes. Ms. Arntz is a Credentialed Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association.
Lucius D. Bunton	Mr. Bunton received his law degree from the Southern Methodist University School of Law. His practice, Law Offices of Lucius Bunton, is limited to conducting private mediations. In addition to special education mediations, Mr. Bunton mediates cases involving many areas of law. He previously practiced administrative law, employment law, civil litigation, civil rights litigation and served as a special education hearing officer for thirty-seven years.
Mary Carolyn Carmichael	Ms. Carmichael received her law degree from the University of Texas School of Law. She is with the law firm of Nance & Carmichael, PC. In addition to special education mediations, Ms. Carmichael has mediated family law and children's rights matters. She has served as a special education hearing officer and has experience in school, public utilities, administrative, disability, and employment law.
Elizabeth Chappell	Ms. Chappell received her law degree from the University of Texas School of Law. Her practice, Chappell Mediation, is dedicated to family-based legal services, offering mediation and legal counsel for education, divorce, parenting disputes, child custody and support, and elder care. She is a former felony and child abuse prosecutor. Ms. Chappell is a *Credentialed Mediator* with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association and is a Texas State Board of Education Heroes for Children award recipient.

MEDIATOR	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Debbie Cotton	Ms. Cotton received her law degree from Western State University, College of Law and has been a sole practitioner since 1997. Ms. Cotton has practiced in the areas of special education, family and probate/elder law and received her mediation certification in 1999. Her practice, The Cotton Law Firm, PLLC, now focuses primarily on mediations in Texas and multiple other states. Ms. Cotton served as a school board trustee for twelve years. She is a Credentialed Distinguished Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association.
Angela Downes	Ms. Downes received her law degree from Texas A&M School of Law. She is a professor at UNT Dallas College of Law in Dallas, Texas, where she is Assistant Director of Experiential Education. Ms. Downes teaches clinical courses, leads the 40-hour mediation course and mediation clinic. She has been a credentialed mediator for over 20 years, with a substantial focus on education issues. She is a former prosecutor for the Dallas County District Attorney's office Family Violence Unit and has also served as Senior Attorney in the Child Abuse Department for the National District Attorneys Association. Ms. Downes serves as a neutral on the Dallas panel for JAMS formerly known as Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services, Inc.
Luecretia Dillard	Ms. Dillard received her law degree from University of Houston Law Center. She spent many years as a partner in private practice at Dillard, McElvaney & Kovach LLP. Her current practice is limited to serving as an arbitrator and mediator. In addition to special education mediations, Ms. Dillard mediates and arbitrates a wide variety of employment law and commercial disputes. Ms. Dillard also served as a special education hearing officer from 1996 to 2011 and special education mediator from 2003 to 2011.
Brenda Jarden-Holter	Ms. Jarden-Holter received her law degree from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University. She is a solo practitioner and has experience conducting family law and Child Protective Services mediations. Ms. Jarden-Holter also has experience in military criminal litigation, family law, administrative law, disability law, and probate law. She is a retired U.S. Army Judge Advocate General and is a *Credentialed Mediator* with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association.
Kimberlee Kovach	Ms. Kovach received her law degree from the Capital University Law School and has been a mediator since 1978. Her practice, Kovach Dispute Resolution, focuses primarily on mediation and arbitration, and she also serves as a special education hearing officer. Ms. Kovach has mediated a wide variety of cases, including civil litigation, family, employment, and health care matters. Ms. Kovach holds the designation of *Credentialed Distinguished Mediator* with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association. She is also a nationally and internationally recognized mediation trainer and received a Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Academy of Mediators.

MEDIATOR	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Marisela Maddox	Ms. Maddox graduated from the University of St. Thomas School of Law and has been licensed to practice law since 2009. She also has a Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Mediation from Tel Aviv University. In addition to special education mediations, she mediates disputes involving families, divorcing parents, Child Protective Services, medical providers and insurers, and civil law matters. Ms. Maddox is a Credentialed Advanced Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association.
Deborah H. McElvaney	Ms. McElvaney received her law degree from South Texas College of Law. She is in private practice at DHMcElvaney Law, PLLC, where she currently focuses her practice exclusively on serving as a hearing officer and mediator in special education disputes. Ms. McElvaney served as a Special Education Mediator from 2003-2014 and as a Special Education Hearing Officer from 1996-2013; 2017-present. In addition to special education law and mediation, she has experience in administrative law, commercial law, civil litigation, arbitration, and state and federal appellate law. Before attending law school, she was a classroom teacher.
Lynn E. Rubinett	Ms. Rubinett received her law degree from Northeastern University School of Law. Her law practice, Law Office of Lynn Rubinett, focuses exclusively on conflict resolution including mediation, arbitration, independent hearing officer services, and conflict coaching. Ms. Rubinett has worked in the arena of special education for 27 years as a mediator and hearing officer. She also mediates disputes related to family, labor, employment, and organizational dynamics. In addition to working as a mediator, she serves as an arbitrator in labor and employment disputes. Her prior experience includes litigation in the areas of labor, employment, education, disability rights, civil rights, and administrative law. Ms. Rubinett is a *Distinguished Credentialed Mediator* with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association.
Renee M. Rusch	Ms. Rusch received her law degree from Boalt Hall School of Law (UC Berkeley School of Law). She is retired from the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH), where she served as an administrative law judge and the alternative dispute resolution team leader. During her tenure at SOAH, Ms. Rusch conducted mediations involving a wide range of issues and presided over special education due process hearings. She also has experience in administrative law, civil rights law, disability law, employment law, government law, health care law, education law, and civil litigation.
Barbara L. Stroud	Ms. Stroud received her law degree from the University of Texas School of Law. Her firm, Stroud Mediation, focuses on alternative dispute resolution and limited scope representation in family law matters. She has conducted family, Child Protective Services, consumer, personal injury, and real estate mediations. Ms. Stroud also has experience in personal injury law and civil litigation. She is a *Credentialed Advanced Mediator* with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association.