

# Update

September 2010

## Using Interpreters in Mediation

By Andrew Kidde

Over the years we have had a small but steady number of mediations where an interpreter was required. Given recent demographic trends, we can only expect that number to go up. According to recent census data, about 30 % of Bellevue's population speaks a language other than English at home, and according to Bellevue School District, there are 70 different languages spoken by students enrolled in their schools.

Our mediation service needs to be accessible and relevant to the whole community we serve. We need to be able to provide comparable service to people who have no English, or who have some difficulty communicating because English is their second language. When in doubt about whether a person's English is good enough, it is best to err on the side of providing an interpreter. Non-English speakers in the US are practiced at surviving linguistically and creating good initial impressions. So they may display more competence in initial conversations than they could sustain in longer and more complex dialogues. Functioning in a mediation is a complex task, and we must also be aware of a possible power imbalance for the non-native speaker.

Another tempting alternative is to think that a party's friend or relative who speaks English well could be used as an interpreter. It is usually hard to know however, how accurately they interpret, and how much of their own bias they



inject into. It is not usually good practice to use anyone as an interpreter who has any relationship with either of the parties, or an indirect involvement in the dispute. Some mediators have language skills and may be able to undertake work in languages other than in English, but they may lack the skills of experienced interpreters.

When we need interpreters we usually use the King County Superior Court's Office of Interpreter Services (OSI) to get referrals for local interpreters. As their web site states their panel of interpreters work in more than 100 languages: "from Afghani to Zulu." OSI screens its interpreters to make sure they have the proper qualifications. OSI also conducts a certification process for interpreters of the languages of Cambodian, Cantonese, Korean, Lao, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. Our experience has been that the interpreters we hire through OSI usually have the experience to translate without undermining the mediation process.

Interpreting is not a casual matter. It is a formal profession with a code of ethics and fairly well defined best practices. Interpreters must learn to use both the simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and when to use which type. Simultaneous is on-going interpreting conducted at a low whisper while speaking occurs. Consecutive is interpreting that occurs at the end of the statement. Interpreting is a hard job -- if you have any doubt of that, just remember how challenging

our simple restating exercise can be, and then add on top of that the problem of translating and the fatigue that may set in after a few hours of this. It can be made much harder if the people using the interpreter service don't know the proper protocols for working with interpreters.

For mediators, working with interpreters in mediation adds complexity to an already difficult job. It requires adjusting to a slower pace of work; many mediators will have little opportunity to gain this experience and will need some training in working with interpreters, just as interpreters will need some training in working with mediators and a basic understanding of the mediation process.

The mediators also need to understand how to work most effectively in this different context. Several questions may come up. Who should the mediator look at: the party or the interpreter? Should there be extra breaks? What signs might tell them whether the interpreter is doing a good job? If the mediator believes there is a cultural misunderstanding in addition to the language barrier, can the mediator rely on the interpreter to be a cultural interpreter as well as a language interpreter.

These are important questions that any mediator needs to know before he or she mediates a case with an interpreter for the first time. To get the answers, please come to our next in-service on Sept. 16 (see this page for details) when Martha Cohen, director of the King County Superior Court Office of Interpreter Services will present to us on using interpreters in mediation.

### **BNMP launches Parent Teen Conversations Workshops**

After conducting a needs assessment with multiple agencies involved in teen issues, BNMP has decided to offer a new service: Parent Teen Conversations Workshops. These workshops will explore intergeneration issues and help build communication skills. They will be offered on the evening of the first Monday over every month starting in October. Thanks goes to Jenny Winkler for her excellent work on the needs assessment and in developing the curriculum.

### **Come to our next In-service: Tips on Working with Interpreters Presented by Martha Cohen**

This session will focus on how to work effectively with interpreters and will include information on the interpreting process, qualifying an interpreter, interpreter ethics, and tips for conducting interviews through an interpreter. Included will be a short hands-on practice and a video demonstrating appropriate and inappropriate interpreting. Attendees are encouraged to come with questions scenarios you have encountered.

Martha Cohen is manager of Office of Interpreter Services at King County Superior Court.

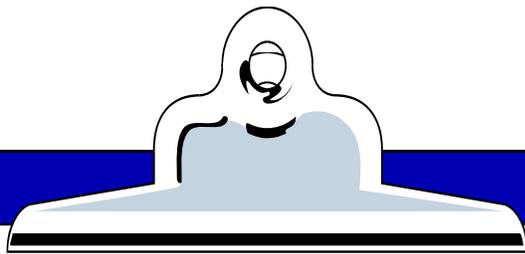
### ***October In-Service Training:* Nonviolent Communication and Mediation**

**Tues. Oct.19th, 6:30-8:00 p.m. in Rm. 1E-112**

*(For both Parent-Teen and Neighborhood programs)*

Please join us for an informative training of nonviolent communication and how we can bring it into our mediation work. We welcome trainers Holly Michelle Eckert and Evan Gorsline from the Nonviolent Communication Center of North Seattle. Holly is the founder and a certified trainer with the Center for Nonviolent Communication, speaker and author of *Graduating from Guilt*. Evan has completed the basic mediation training through Antioch University and the Dispute Resolution Center and is a devotee of Marshall Rosenberg and nonviolent communication. He will be focusing on how to use the skills in mediation work. There will be time for questions.

To RSVP email [gjones@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:gjones@bellevuewa.gov)  
or call 425-452-4091



## Parent—Teen Update

By  
Gwen Jones

We have bid a fond farewell to Cathy Goldman, and are now transitioning from summer to fall activities as we begin a new school year. We have a wonderful group of volunteers to draw from for the Parent-Teen Mediation Program. Many of you are hoping to observe cases and I will continue to email those opportunities to you.



In the meantime, we have some exciting events this fall. On Thursday, September 16th from 6:30 to 8 PM, all Parent-Teen Mediation volunteers are invited to a joint Neighborhood and Parent-Teen In-Service Training on "Using Interpreters in Mediation" with Martha Cohen. Then on Wed., September 22nd from 6 to 8 PM I will meet with the newly trained mediators to talk about "The Intake Process."

On Thursday, October 7th from 7 to 9 PM, we're inviting families of our volunteers to "Family Night" so they can learn more about the program. And on October 12<sup>th</sup>, Glenn Hasslinger from the Bellevue School District will talk to us about "The Becca Bill; What we Need to Know." He does a great presentation so please attend if you have not heard him speak. All of these meetings will be held here at Bellevue City Hall. See you then!

## **BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators**

***Joint Neighborhood Parent-Teen In-Services:***  
**Working with Interpreters in Mediation**  
with Martha Cohen  
Thurs. Sept. 16th, from 6:30-8 PM in Rm 1E-112

**Nonviolent Communication and Mediation**  
with Holly Michelle Eckert and Evan Gorsline  
Tues. Oct. 19th, from 6:30-8 PM in Rm 1E-112

***Parent-Teen In-Service Trainings:***

**Nuts and Bolts of the Intake Process**  
Wed. Sept. 22nd, from 6-8 PM in Rm 1E-112

**Family Night: An Orientation to Mediation**  
with Cathy Goldman  
Thurs. Oct. 7th, from 7-9 PM in Rm 1E-120

**Becca Bill and Beyond**  
with Glenn Hasslinger, Bellevue School District  
Tues. Oct. 12th, from 6-8 PM in Rm 1E-112

***Training:***

Dispute Resolution Center of King County presents:  
***Breaking Impasse: Straightforward Strategies for Mediators & Advocates*** with **Sam Imperati**, nationally known mediator and attorney, and Director of Institute for Conflict Management.

Friday, Sept. 10, 2010 8:30 am - 5:30 pm  
At the Good Shepherd Center  
4649 Sunnyside Avenue N, Seattle  
Registration \$120

Email [kaseya@kcdrc.org](mailto:kaseya@kcdrc.org) for a registration form and more information.

Co-sponsored by BNMP.

**Program Staff:**

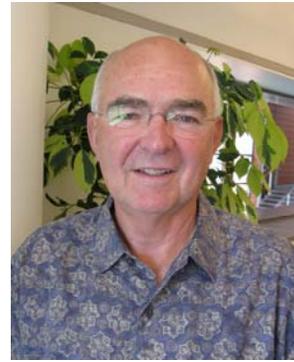
Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897
Parent-Teen Coordinator:	Cathy Goldman	-	452-4091

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>  
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

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*Volunteer Profile:*

**Mike Brown**



After retiring from 40+ years in the business world I looked around for challenging opportunities that also provide fun and satisfaction. The Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program is satisfying those requirements. I started with the Program early this year and completed the basic training programs. I think the biggest challenge for me is to leave my arbitration mindset behind, in my business experience, and adopt the mediation approach to dispute resolution. I have learned that solutions derived from give and take between the disputing parties are more enduring than those handed down by someone in a position of authority. I have found the challenge of mediation is to help diffuse polarized attitudes and sustain productive communication. I feel fortunate to be part of the BNMP and look forward to continuing to give something back to our community while finding challenges and satisfaction.

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**BELLEVUE  
NEIGHBORHOOD MEDIATION PROGRAM**

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