

AMERICAN SETTLEMENT CENTERS FROM THE MEDIATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By: J. Timothy Patterson

In 2010, I completed a significant role reversal from primarily litigator to primarily mediator. Although I had been serving as a mediator for many years, it was my goal to become more involved. I felt that in order to do this, I needed assistance in marketing myself and my skills.

I was introduced to American Settlement Centers (ASC) by a friend and was invited to visit their facilities in Farmington Hills. From the moment I stepped into their lobby and met and talked with the receptionist I felt this was right for me. The ensuing tour of the center and meetings with co-founders, Deb and Christine Logan and General Counsel, Nina Korkis confirmed my initial impression. These were serious people dedicated and committed to advancing ADR in Michigan.

One of the benefits I found by affiliating with ASC is that they have carefully selected a panel of skilled and qualified neutral mediators who are respected and well-known to members of the Bar. All are certified and have years of legal and ADR experience. In the aggregate, they cover just about all areas of the law. The average fee charged by ASC mediators is very competitive and well below fees charged by some of the more familiar names in the mediator world. Best of all, there are no administrative or facility fees charged. Everything is included in the mediator's hourly fee. Because of the structure and processes developed by ASC, mediations and arbitrations can be scheduled on very short notice. There are no month-long delays. ASC neutrals have an extremely high success rate in resolving disputes.

ASC mediators are committed to mediation in the true sense of the word. They will not pressure any party into a settlement and will maintain their neutrality throughout the process. This results in positive outcomes and feelings for both attorneys and litigants.

The center features eight conference rooms of varying sizes to accommodate meetings with litigants and attorneys. These state-of-the-art facilities feature flat screen TV's, computers and Internet access in each room. The warmth and comfort of the surroundings give visitors an immediate positive reaction, which promotes the neutrality of the center and its sole focus of resolving disputes. If parties to mediation are initially turned off by the location or make-up of the facility it makes it more difficult for any mediator to bring them into a settlement mode. The neutral atmosphere and tailored design of the ASC facilities puts all parties at ease and promotes dispute resolution.

ASC features a staff of professionals who create a positive feeling about the process that begins with the very first contacts with the parties for scheduling until the conclusion of mediation. The administrative staff is trained to support the mediation or arbitration process and add a new level of support services not typically seen in other ADR settings. Once the parties have reached a settlement, the administrative staff assists the attorneys and parties and the mediator in reducing the agreement to writing, utilizing computers and big screen monitors to edit and formalize the final documents. All parties input their suggestions into the document as it is prepared. The parties and their attorneys no longer have to cope with difficult penmanship or scratched out edits.

I am very passionate about mediation because it reduces the cost and stress of litigation and eliminates a win/lose result and replaces it with a win/win because all parties can leave the process with a positive feeling having crafted their own settlement. I encourage anyone in need of resolving

his or her dispute to contact ASC. They can assist you in selecting the right neutral for your situation or you can visit their website, www.amsetcen.com, and click on Neutrals to see the profile of each of their seventeen specialists.

If you are at all like me, I am confident you will enjoy your experience at ASC. Give them a try. You won't be disappointed.

Tim Patterson

J. Timothy "Tim" Patterson is the senior shareholder of Booth Patterson, P.C. and has been practicing law for 43 years. He has been an active trial attorney handling a wide array of cases ranging from municipal law to personal injury and other contract disputes. His vast experience as a litigator coupled with his extensive experience as a mediator and arbitrator have positioned him well to be one of American Settlement Centers' neutrals. Tim can be reached at 248-865-3904.

