



Peer Mediation Program Supervisor and Manager FAQs

What will my employee be expected to do as a Peer Mediator?

As a Peer Mediator, your employee will help City employees resolve conflict as the lowest level possible. Peer Mediators serve as a neutral third-party facilitator to guide conversations between two employees experiencing conflict in the workplace. Peer Mediators will play an essential role in creating and maintain a safe, confidential space where the parties in conflict can speak and be heard equally. Peer Mediators will support the two parties in creating a fair and agreeable solution to their conflict.

How will this opportunity benefit my employee?

This is a professional development opportunity. If your employee is selected to be part of our Citywide Peer Mediation cohort, they will learn Workplace Conflict Mediation skills. They will learn how to be a neutral third-party mediator and learn how to provide two employees in conflict a safe, space to work through issues and restore their working relationship. As a member of our Citywide Peer Mediation cohort, your employee will be part of launching an exciting and ambitious citywide effort to improve our workplace culture across all departments. Your employee will play an instrumental role in providing other employees in the City with a structured program to resolve low-level conflicts before they escalate into more serious matters that can lead to grievances and formal complaints.

How will this opportunity benefit my team/division/department?

If selected to be part of the Citywide Peer Mediation cohort, your employee will be asked to mediate conflicts that occur outside of their own department so they can remain neutral. However, your employee will learn great conflict management skills through their Peer Mediation training that can certainly be shared with you and your team. We understand that conflicts that are not addressed expeditiously can result in an unproductive and unhealthy environment for all. Your team members may face some low-level conflicts that can be settled quickly and internally if you have team member with some basic skills in conflict mediation. As a member of the Peer Mediation cohort, your team member will be able to utilize their new skills to support positive team dynamics within your own team.

How likely is it for my employee to be selected for the Peer Mediation cohort?

DHR has received over 200 applications from City employees interested in becoming volunteer peer mediators. As part of the pilot program, we anticipate selecting approximately 24 employees to serve as our first cohort of Peer Mediators. Over the next year, we hope to grow our peer mediation cohort to include up to 100 City employees.

How much release time will I need to provide my employee to serve as a Peer Mediator?

If selected as a Peer Mediator, your employee will need to have paid release time to participate in approximately 40 hours of training that will occur in the months of February and March. We will provide a training schedule to all selected Peer Mediators and their managers so they can anticipate when release time will be needed. After this initial training, your employee may be asked to mediate conflicts for the Citywide Peer Mediation Program for no more than 10% of their work time in any given month.

What factors should I consider when recommending my employee for this opportunity?

We are seeking Peer Mediators who have strong emotional intelligence skills (e.g. they can interact positively with others, they can manage their own emotions well, they are good at listening to others and understanding other people's perspectives, etc.). We also seek Peer Mediators who are interested in helping other people resolve conflicts so that the workplace can be a positive place for everyone. Peer Mediators should be well-regarded by their coworkers and should not be involved in unresolved interpersonal conflicts themselves.

What are reasons why I should NOT approve my employee to be a Peer Mediator?

If you have concerns about your employee's work performance, you should not approve their application to serve as a Peer Mediator. Also, if your employee has had challenges with interpersonal relationships in the workplace and/or are involved in unresolved conflict themselves (eg. they don't get along well with other coworkers; they have difficulty managing their own emotions, etc.), then you should not approve their application to serve as a Peer Mediator. Additionally, if it is absolutely not possible for you to grant release time to your employee to participate in the required trainings for the Peer Mediation program (approx. 40 hours of training, spread out through the months of February and March), or if you absolutely cannot provide your employee with approximately 10% of release time each month to mediate conflict because it would be a disruption to business operations you should not approve your employee's application. The Supervisor Approval form will ask you to clearly specify the reason(s) why you are not approving your employee's application to serve as a Peer Mediator. Additionally, please have a conversation with your employee if you are not approving their request to participate in the Program.

What are examples of "Disruption to Business Operations" that may be acceptable reasons to deny my employee's application to serve as a Peer Mediator?

Examples of disruptions to business operations include:

- Your employee has specialized knowledge/skills that a replacement cannot fill, and you cannot adjust/flex your employee's work hours or workload to accommodate release time for the Peer Mediation program.
- Providing release time to your employee will prevent your team from fulfilling essential or mission-critical work; and there are no adjustments you can make to workloads or work assignments to accommodate this release time.
- Your team is currently engaged in essential work for the City due to the Covid-19 emergency response, and you cannot release your employee for the Peer Mediation program that will begin in February.

Important note: This is an important citywide program prioritized by Mayor Breed and all department heads. If selected, managers are asked to be flexible and make every effort to accommodate their employee's application and service as a Peer Mediator.