

## CHOICES IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION CREDENTIALING & PREPARATION

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CHOICE	CREDENTIAL VALUE	PREPARATION VALUE
<p><b>1. Conflict Resolution Graduate Degree</b> at the Institute for Conflict Analysis &amp; Resolution at George Mason University or similar program.</p>	<p>This is an excellent credential for employment with many organizations such as colleges and universities, Non-Governmental Organizations, non-profit mediation centers, international groups and similar organizations. However, because there is still no established path or even wide recognition of the position of professional mediator or conflict resolver, this credential is less valuable than a law degree for establishing a private consulting practice or in seeking employment with the Federal Government or a corporation.</p>	<p><b>Excellent:</b> Over the past two decades of development of the field of conflict resolution, it has become increasingly recognized that pre-intervention analysis plays an extremely important role in designing and selecting the method of conflict resolution. The graduate school education is an excellent way to learn to conduct a broad social and inter-personal analysis of the conflict and the many intervention techniques.</p> <p><b>Poor to moderate:</b> Usually this type of education provides only limited skills training and practice opportunities.</p>
<p><b>2. American Law School &amp; Bar Membership</b></p>	<p>Because the United States was founded on the basis of private, enforceable, rights, the system of rights enforcement - the legal system - is preeminent as the means of resolving disputes. So embedded is this in American thought that often people are unable to recognize, perceive or give credence to non-legal conflict factors, such as interests, values, human needs, honor, respect, etc. For these reasons, the American law school education and bar membership is a recognized and established credential and government sanctioned license that has the highest value as a credential and is often a minimum entry requirement for Federal, State and Corporate employment even in the conflict resolution and mediation field. It is especially important and recognizable to the potential clients of private practitioners - individuals, companies, Federal agencies, etc.</p>	<p><b>Excellent:</b> This is still the best training available to understand the complex American legal system within which many conflicts are settled.</p> <p><b>Poor:</b> A legal education is poor preparation for helping people resolve their disputes in a win-win, collaborative style. The skills of a lawyer and those of a mediator are as different as night and day. Preparation for one will not prepare you for the other.</p>
<p><b>3. Non-Academic Certificate in Mediation &amp; Dispute Resolution Skills</b> - at the Northern Virginia Mediation Service or similar organization.</p>	<p>There is no recognized and established licensing, credentialing or accrediting authority that establishes uniform criteria or standards or licenses for such certificate programs. The value of the credential lies in a) the recognition people have of the granting institution and/or b) the acceptance of the value of continuing professional education and skills training. Such certificates are often seen as valuable to mid-career professionals seeking raises and promotions and changes in responsibilities and are often recognized by their organizations. As with other credentials that are not uniform or widely known or understood, it can also be used to offer potential clients evidence of having accomplished at least some level of professional proficiency.</p>	<p><b>Excellent:</b> This is excellent preparation for practicing the skills of mediation and conflict resolution. Trainees learn and practice - and practice again - the actual skills they will use in the real world and when to use them.</p> <p><b>Poor:</b> Skills training is a poor environment to learn about the theory and research upon which the skills are based.</p>
<p><b>4. State Court Mediator Certification</b> - such as Virginia Supreme Court mediator certification</p>	<p>Certification is not required to practice mediation or other conflict resolution process. Many states, such as Virginia, have statutes or rules of court which require "certification" in order to be qualified for referral of court cases. In Virginia this credential has marginal utility as a means of obtaining work with the courts because the courts refer very few cases and virtually none in a manner which would generate substantial professional-level fees. However, because it is a state-awarded credential based on established criteria, it has some value as a credential in the field of mediation.</p>	<p><b>Excellent:</b> Typically, state certification requires some level of apprenticeship with real clients and court cases. For this reason it is very focused on, and excellent preparation for, resolving these types of disputes.</p> <p><b>Poor:</b> Beyond the training in small claims and custody cases, the training becomes less and less suitable for work in more complex cases.</p>