



NYSAMP

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NYSAMP Staff

Charlotte Carter, Statewide Program Director, has been a mediator since 1992. Previously, she managed a program of the New York State Dispute Resolution Association for victims of clergy sexual abuse. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Greene County Cornell Cooperative Extension, and is the director of her local food pantry. She has a JD from Yale Law School.

Christine Tauzel, Program Manager, was a constituent aide for NYS Senator James L. Seward, and a program technician for the USDA Farm Service Agency in Delaware and Otsego Counties. Chris's family operates a dairy farm in Otsego County; she was active in the Farm Bureau, 4H and Cornell Cooperative Extension. She is a graduate of Cornell University.

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NYS AGRICULTURAL MEDIATION PROGRAM 2010 Annual Report



Message from the Director:

Each of us in the agricultural community was tested during this past year in our capacity to adapt to uncertain times. As farm input prices soared and prices of too many agricultural products plummeted, we all scrambled to make decisions that might bring us some stability. We tried to keep our focus on our work and our families, but we were inundated with global news that did little to add to our sense of security. Even our weather patterns seemed to reflect and magnify the sense of unpredictability and crisis!

Watching how crops and livestock adapt to adversity reminds us that resiliency is a good indicator of long term success. Resilience is not just an individual attribute, it is a process. Whether we are plants, animals, or humans, resiliency is our ability to make use of resources and to collaborate in a sustainable way that allows us to thrive in difficult conditions and long into the future.

As mediators, we witness this resiliency and collaboration frequently. We watch time and time again when, even in the midst of pain and hopelessness, people are able to take the time to

really listen to one another, and then work together to create unexpectedly positive outcomes.

Recently, it was our privilege to play a role in a young dairy couple who were already under financial stress when the mother of their four children became very ill. Extended family members and neighbors pitched in to help with children and chores, but medical expenses left the business near default on FSA and other loans. The creditors both agreed to try mediation; the group addressed the arrears and then collaborated to restructure the loan payments for a more realistic plan for the future.

Resiliency is not merely an individual character trait; it can be cultivated. Reaching out to address financial debt and credit problems is a solid first step. Mediation can help improve the quality of life and economic stability in our rural communities. In addition to offering an alternative to costly, time consuming and stressful litigation, mediation leads to well informed and workable plans.

Charlotte Carter,
Statewide Program Director

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Statewide

NYSAMP services have grown dramatically during the past six years; we are now one of the largest certified agricultural mediation programs in the nation.

NYSAMP provides free and low-cost mediations statewide, with local offices in every county in New York. In 2010, farmers in 35 counties used NYSAMP services.

328

NYSAMP Cases 2010

850

People Served in 2010

84%

Agreement Rate

Straight Talk

In 2010, NYSAMP services helped producers and agribusinesses sit down and talk about some very difficult and controversial situations in a way that was honest and productive. Some of the problems included:

- Small claims and unpaid bills
- Machinery and supplier credit
- Bank loans
- Child custody and parenting plans
- Farm succession
- Interpersonal and neighbor complaints
- USDA appeals

Fair Solutions

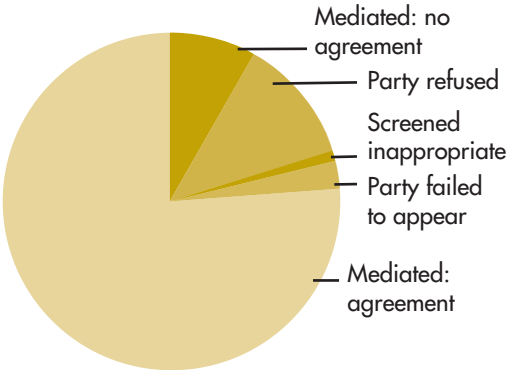
NYSAMP helps farmers and those in the agricultural community create workable solutions to their challenging conflicts. NYSAMP mediations also save time. Although complex cases can require multiple mediation sessions over several months, the vast majority of situations can be addressed quickly. The average time from first contact with parties to completion of the case is just over 16 days.

NYSAMP Success Story

An elderly couple, fourth generation dairy farmers, was faced with mounting debt. Significant medical bills made them turn to credit cards to meet their basic expenses. Too proud to ask for help from their adult off-farm children, they applied for new credit cards to pay the monthly minimums on the existing cards. One day, after overhearing her mother’s phone call with a collection agency, their daughter suggested mediation. NYSAMP helped get the whole family and the collection agency to the table. The mediator opened communication for the first time, so the family was able to deal with the debt. They arranged more sessions to make a plan for the future of the farm.



2010 Case Outcomes



Local NYSAMP staff accept referrals and requests, then talk with the individuals involved to learn about the disagreement and discuss how mediation might help. If all parties agree, a session can be quickly scheduled for a mutually convenient time and location. As the chart above shows, the vast majority of NYSAMP cases result in agreements.

Training

NYSAMP also provides low or no cost training to groups of farmers and others in agricultural businesses. This year, trainings in communication skills, conflict management and effective negotiation were provided to a wide range of organizations including:

- LEAD NY Class 13
- Hudson Valley Leadership Forum
- Farm Bureau’s Young Farmers and Ranchers
- FarmNet consultants.

NYSAMP also presented an Eastern New York farm family divorce mediation training with seasoned mediators from Orange County to the North Country