

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 14, 2020

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**MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES ‘MEND NYC’ A CITYWIDE PROGRAM FOR
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY ESTABLISHMENTS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS TO
MEDIATE QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES**

NEW YORK—Today, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced **MEND NYC**, a program to provide mediation to New Yorkers and hospitality businesses across the city who are in disputes over quality-of-life issues. This is a free, innovative alternative that can bring lasting solutions to longstanding local issues that have been laid bare by the COVID-19 crisis, which has caused an increase in complaints to 311.

MEND (Mediating Establishment and Neighbor Disputes) NYC will serve hundreds of New York residents and businesses each year, creating opportunities to resolve disputes before they escalate to the need for formal enforcement, such as issuing summonses, which can add financial hardship to small businesses operating under new rules and guidelines. Mediation is a constructive conversation between people in conflict that is facilitated by an experienced, neutral third person. Mediation provides participants an opportunity to collaboratively design creative solutions and repair tense relationships. MEND will get businesses and New Yorkers to communicate directly and establish respectful ongoing dialogue, helping them to compromise and coexist.

“The success of our neighborhood establishments is central to our entire city's success,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “When complaints arise, MEND NYC will bring people together to creatively solve problems, helping us save deployment of our enforcement agencies for the most serious violations.”

"At the moment we live in now, we must find creative, common-sense solutions that help as many New Yorkers as possible, and that is exactly what MEND NYC aims to do," said **Deputy Mayor Laura Anglin**. "By starting with mediation, instead of going straight to inspections and summonses, we will be able to build lasting, healthier relationships with residents and businesses across New York City."

“MEND NYC will use mediation to mend strained relationships between neighbors and businesses and resolve quality of life issues before an enforcement agency is called in for inspection and summonses issued,” said **Joni Kletter, Commissioner and Chief Administrative Law Judge of the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH)**. “The end goal for MEND NYC is to help create an environment where New York City residents and businesses successfully coexist and our neighborhoods flourish.”

“After two years of piloting a mediation program to help resolve quality of life issues between venues and residents, I’m grateful that our office is launching MEND NYC in partnership with OATH,” said the **Senior Executive Director of New York City’s Office of Nightlife at the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, Ariel Palitz**. “We can’t wait to offer this service and help New York City and its nightlife community find common ground and thrive together, again.”

The Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) will administer the MEND NYC program in partnership with the Office of Nightlife at the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment. OATH is the City’s central independent administrative law court where summonses issued by the City’s various enforcement agencies are filed. Also housed in OATH is the City’s central mediation center, the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution, which has traditionally been responsible for mediating City government workplace conflict. MEND NYC will represent the first time OATH’s Center for Creative Conflict Resolution makes its services and expertise widely available to the general public, with mediations taking place outside of the OATH court system hearing process. OATH has professional mediators and conflict resolution trainers at its Center but OATH has also worked diligently to partner with conflict resolution groups and law schools across the City to build up a roster of trained mediators who can assist the MEND NYC program. These mediators will be working pro bono and will help ensure that the MEND NYC program is available to all who want to participate in this free option.

The Office of Nightlife, a non-enforcement liaison between the City and the nightlife industry and community, will be actively referring cases where there may be chronic or urgent quality of life complaints related to a restaurant, bar, or other nightlife venue. The Office of Nightlife will also provide education and support to businesses to assist with compliance and with maintaining good relationships with their neighbors.

“MEND NYC will help New Yorkers and their local nightlife businesses mend relationships, forge lasting solutions and thrive together,” said the **Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, Anne del Castillo**. “Our hospitality sector defines our city as a global center of commerce and creativity. When we work together in this way, we can assure a strong recovery for New York City.”

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Administration has worked tirelessly to find creative solutions to help the business community recover. Education and communication are two key parts of ensuring that the recovery process continues unabated. Fines should serve as a last resort because they hinder the recovery process for small businesses. To that end, MEND NYC will serve as invaluable resource, bringing businesses and residents to the table to discuss and resolve critical issues of common concern. Commissioner Kletter and Executive Director Palitz have the passion and foresight to ensure the program’s success,” said **Kapil Longani, Counsel to the Mayor**.

“As a City, we look to provide our small businesses with a full scope of services to ensure their businesses grow and thrive and that they consistently get the resources they need. This new program, from our partners at OATH, works to ensure that business owners have the opportunities to correct their violations prior to being fined. We are working collaboratively to

fairly address the challenges our small businesses face at this time,” said **Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris**.

“The New York City Hospitality Alliance supports the City’s new MEND NYC mediation program to help venues resolve quality of life disputes with their neighbors which have historically resulted in high fines and punishments over resolvable conflicts. This alternative approach of mediation which began at the Office of Nightlife is a good alternative that I think will benefit everyone. The residents, and especially the businesses that are struggling so hard for survival right now,” said **Andrew Rigie, Executive Director, NYC Hospitality Alliance**.

“Dispute resolution is vital to deescalating situations that do not immediately require law enforcement to be present. Communication is key in order to improve the quality of life of our residents,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**, “We need to take a community based approach to tackle disputes that can be resolved through mediation. I look forward to working alongside Mayor de Blasio and my colleagues to ensure this initiative is implemented across the City.”

“We are proud to partner with MEND NYC to provide mediation services to help residents, businesses and organizations in NYC to productively resolve their disputes especially in these challenging and chaotic times,” said **Professor Beryl Blaustone, Founding Director of the Mediation Clinic, at Main Street Legal Services, Inc. at CUNY School of Law**. “We are a public interest law school and we place priority on working with MEND NYC in providing greater access to justice for those who have disputes .”

“At New York Peace Institute, we witness on a daily basis the transformational power of the mediation process, and we can attest to its effectiveness and efficiency in resolving quality-of-life issues that arise between neighbors, communities, and businesses. We anticipate that the new MEND NYC initiative will provide much-needed relief for our NYC community. We have been a partner of the Office of Nightlife since its inception and look forward to supporting this project moving forward,” said **Jennifer Magida, CEO, New York Peace Institute**

“New York City is unlike any other city in the world, and it’s conflicts are no exception. As “New York’s Law School,” New York Law School recognizes the need for a dispute resolution program as unique as the City itself. As a longtime partner of OATH, New York Law School is proud to join the MEND project to solve real-world issues impacting New Yorkers. By offering free conflict-resolution services like mediation, New York Law School students can help build community by empowering residents,” said **Danielle B. Shalov, Director of the Mediation Clinic at New York Law School**.

“NYCID is excited to be able to provide trained Staten Island community conflict resolvers to work with fellow community residents and merchants to address challenges and differences that arise as a result of a new way of doing business in these unprecedented times,” said **Elizabeth Bonici, Assistant Director of New York Center for Interpersonal Development (NYCID) the Community Dispute Resolution Center (CDRC) for Staten Island**.

“During the COVID 19 pandemic, the need for cost-effective, innovative conflict resolution is greater than ever,” said **Donna Erez Navot, Director of the Cardozo Law School Mediation Clinic**. “Through the MEND Program, Cardozo students will learn how to lead virtual mediations and get hands on experience helping citizens resolve real-world conflicts playing out around our City. We are proud to provide this free support and look forward to building this mutually beneficial partnership between our students and the City.”

“Mediation is the fastest growing dispute resolution process in the U.S. courts. It addresses the real needs and interests of disputing parties and provides greater efficiencies in the court system. This is an excellent opportunity for law students to provide access to justice for parties in conflict,” said **Professor Jacqueline Nolan-Haley, Director of the ADR & Conflict Resolution Program and the Mediation Clinic at Fordham Law School**.

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