

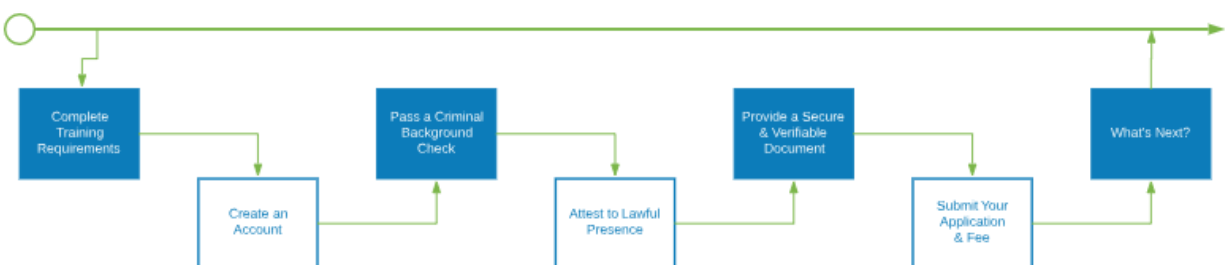
# Becoming a Registered Neutral in Georgia

## What is a registered neutral?

The State of Georgia offers no real “certification” for neutrals. However, through proper training and application approval, neutrals can register with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution. This means that neutrals are added to a registry of those eligible to act as a neutral in court-connected cases.

## What does it take to become a registered neutral?

Those interested in registering in Georgia must meet certain qualifications. Follow the chart below, clicking on each box for more information regarding requirements. Note: information on out-of-state training can be found under “Complete Training Requirements”.

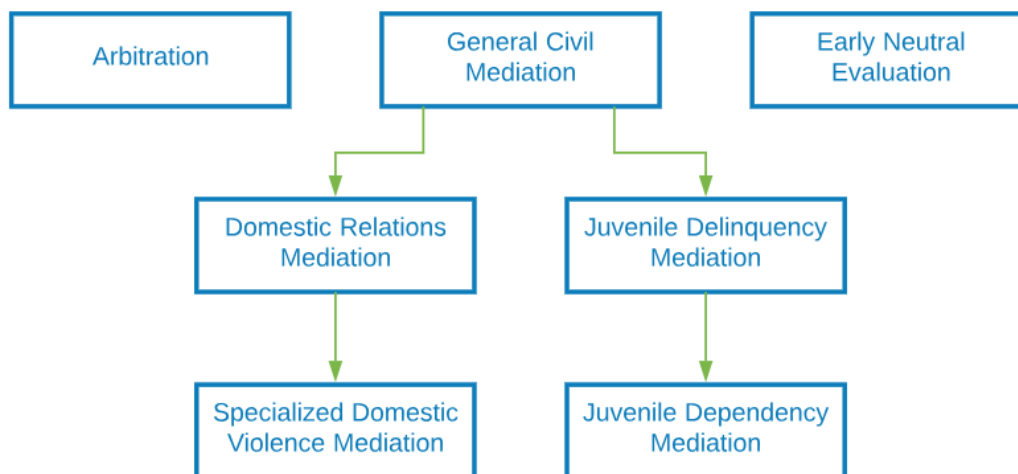


## Complete Training Requirements

### Training

All prospective registered neutrals in the State of Georgia must have completed approved training, pursuant to the category in which they are applying for. Application for registration **must** be submitted within 18 months of completing training. The Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution (the Office) offers registration in the 7 categories listed below. The Office pre-approves trainings for each category, which meet the standards for participants to be able to apply for registration after completion.

While training for Arbitration and Early Neutral Evaluation can be taken on their own, the remaining 5 categories must be taken in sequence:



See each category below to learn about specific requirements. For a full explanation of requirements, including basic mediator competencies, please review Appendix B in the Rules section of our website.

### Arbitration

- 6 Hour training program which qualified for CLE credits
- If conducting as a single arbitrator, that arbitrator must be a lawyer with 5 years experience
- Exception is made for judges and persons with acceptable experience as an arbitrator, as approved at the discretion of the Chair of the Committee on Training and Credentials and the Executive Director of GODR

### General Civil Mediation

- 28 hour training course
- &
- 5 observations/co-mediations completed with a registered neutral
- Or
- 12 hour practicum

**Domestic Relations Mediation**

- Baccalaureate degree from an accredited four-year college
  - Completion of approved General Civil Mediation course
  - 42 hour training course
  - 1 observation and 2 co-mediations completed with a registered neutral
- Or
- 12 hour practicum

**Specialized Domestic Violence Mediation**

- Registration in Domestic Relations Mediation
- 14 hour training course
- Letter of recommendation from ADR program administrator familiar with applicant's work

**Juvenile Delinquency Mediation**

- Completion of approved General Civil Mediation course
- 21 hour training course

**Juvenile Dependency Mediation**

- Completion of approved Juvenile Delinquency Mediation course
  - 28 hour training course (if not registered in Domestic Relations category)
- Or
- 21 hour training course (if already registered in Domestic Relations category)

**Early Neutral Evaluation**

- Lawyer with extensive subject matter expertise in the area of the litigation in question
- 6 hour training course
- Recommended: 28 hour general civil mediation training

While pre-approved trainings are not required, they are strongly encouraged in order to ensure training will meet qualification for registration. As a rule, online trainings are never accepted toward registration. For a list of pre-approved trainings, visit our website at [godr.org](http://godr.org)

If you choose to complete observations/co-mediations, please complete the required form (found under forms & applications) to submit with your training certificate.

*Note: The mediator observed must be actively registered with GODR. This form is fillable and may be completed electronically.*

You will need to upload all training forms to your Georgia Courts Registrar account, which is outlined in the next step. For assistance, you may reach the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808.

**Out-of-State Training**

While there is no formal reciprocity with other state programs, the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution evaluates out-of-state training on a case-by-case basis. Please visit our website for detailed information.

## Create an Account

### **Creating an Account in the Georgia Courts Registrar**

Once training is completed, all parties interested in registering with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution must establish an account in the Georgia Courts Registrar (GCR). The GCR will not only serve you throughout the application process, but it also contains all registration information (including future continuing education and renewals) for the life of a neutrals' registration in Georgia. The GCR can be found by visiting [gcr.onegovcloud.com](http://gcr.onegovcloud.com)

Establishing an account will require such personal information as name, birth date, gender (optional), race (optional), contact information, last four digits of social security number, and education/occupation background. Information must be updated regularly, as contact information changes or as is required by the annual registration renewal. Applicants are also required to answer additional questions and submit documents regarding: criminal background, lawful presence, and government issued identification – covered in detail here, in other sections.

For assistance in establishing an account in the Georgia Courts Registrar, you may reach the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808.

## Pass a Criminal Background Check

### **Criminal Background**

Due to the sensitive nature of working court cases, all applicants must submit to a criminal background check. In addition, there are several questions regarding criminal history that must be answered on the application. Applicants are encouraged to disclose as much information as possible, since honesty is a considerable factor in whether or not to approve an applicant's registration.

Please note that while your form is held on file (you only need to submit one time), consent is implied for periodic background checks throughout the term of registration. All criminal background questions must be updated annually during the renewal application period.

If you are not sure whether or not a criminal history will prevent you from becoming a registered neutral, you may request that the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution complete an ethics pre-certification of fitness to register (an initial criminal history review prior to completing your training) for the small fee of \$50.00. Please reach out to the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808 if you are interested in utilizing this service.

You may download a copy of the required *Consent for Release of Information* form by visiting our website at [godr.org](http://godr.org) and clicking on forms & applications. Please complete and submit to the documents section of your new Georgia Courts Registrar account.

For assistance in uploading documents to your account in the Georgia Courts Registrar, you may reach the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808.

## Attest to Lawful Presence

### **Lawful Presence**

All applicants must attest to lawful presence. To download a copy of the required Affidavit of Lawful Presence, visit our website at [godr.org](http://godr.org) and clicking on forms & applications. Please note that you may only check **one** of the three available options. All affidavits must be notarized and submitted to the applicant's account on the Georgia Courts Registrar. For citizens, the affidavit is only required at the time of first registration and held on file for the duration of registration. Non-citizens must complete and submit an updated affidavit annually, during the renewal application period.

For assistance in uploading documents to your account in the Georgia Courts Registrar, may reach the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808.

## Provide a Secure and Verifiable Document

### **Secure and Verifiable Document** (Government-Issued Identification)

All applicants must submit a secure and verifiable document, which is a specific form of identification accepted by the U.S. Department of State. Ideally, this form of identification should match what is presented to the notary public while completing your affidavit of lawful presence.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** The form of identification provided cannot expire prior to the initial registration period you are applying for. Registration expires April 30 annually. *For example, if you first apply for registration on May 3, 2019, your identification cannot expire prior to May 1, 2020. This rule does not apply to birth certificates.*

Submission should be made through the established account in the Georgia Courts Registrar. For assistance in uploading documents to your account in the Georgia Courts Registrar, you may reach the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808.

## Submit Your Application & Fee

### **Complete Your Application**

Review the *New Application Checklist* by visiting our website at [godr.org](http://godr.org) and clicking on forms & applications. Note that all steps needed to register have been completed. Log into your account in the Georgia Courts Registrar and ensure that all questions are answered and all required documents are uploaded. All tabs should now be yellow, except for payment. Neutrals seeking registration are required to pay the non-refundable fee of \$125 (additional \$25 is due if seeking registration in domestic relations mediation). Please note that your application will not be received until your payment is complete.

For assistance in uploading documents or completing payment, you may reach the Georgia Courts Registrar team at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) or 404-463-3808.



## What's Next?

### What to Expect After Registration

#### Registration Renewal Deadlines

Registration expires after April 30 of every year. You are responsible for renewing your registration annually during the renewal period, which is open from October 1 through December 31. Late renewal begins January 1 and ends April 30; renewing during this period means being in *Lapsed Status* and paying double the regular registration fee. Failure to renew by the April 30 deadline means your registration falls into *Inactive Status*, preventing you from acting as a neutral in court-connected cases. After 730 days from missing your renewal deadline, your registration becomes *Archived* and any reinstatement includes starting over by retaking all training courses.

#### Continuing Education

All registered neutrals must complete the annual continuing education requirement of 3 hours. Those in *Inactive Status* must complete 8 hours. CE hours do not carry over from previous years. ALL neutrals are responsible for self-reporting through the Georgia Courts Registrar; GODR does not automatically receive CLE information from the State Bar of Georgia.

#### Volunteer Status

Neutrals who volunteer their services may submit a sworn affidavit each registration season requesting that their registration fees be waived. This affidavit must be sworn and signed by the director of a court program for which the neutral volunteers. For this purpose, a "volunteer" is defined as a neutral who receives **no** compensation- no matter how little- for providing their services, whether within or outside of a court ADR program. Volunteer waivers are not granted to new applicants.

#### Court-Connected Cases

Each court ADR program sets their own set of requirements for those who choose to be added to their roster. You must contact these programs directly to inquire about requirements and roster availability.

#### Marketing

Though it is possible that individuals will find you in the directory and solicit your services, it is not promised or very likely. All registered neutrals are encouraged to market their own practice. Get out there, build relationships, be creative, and find your niche!

#### Questions?

We encourage all registered neutrals to read and understand the full scope of our rules. Check out our FAQ for answers to common questions. Still stuck? We are here to help; call us at 404-463-3808 or email us at [gcr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gcr@georgiacourts.gov) (registration matters) and [gaodr@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:gaodr@georgiacourts.gov) (all other questions).