

## **Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Illinois Mediators Association**

### **History**

The Eleventh Judicial Circuit Mediators Association was formed more than 30 years ago. In February of 1984, Justice James A. Knecht and Dr. Lynelle C. Hale presented the idea of a mediation program to the McLean County Bar Association, as a way to offer parties an alternate means of resolving family cases. Encouraged by the receptivity of their audience, they planned the creation of a local task force of volunteers, sponsored by the McLean County Mental Health Association, to propose a mediation program, set standards and operating procedures, and organize a local training program for professionals interested in becoming mediators. In 1985 a three-day training program was held, utilizing local legal authorities and nationally recognized mediation trainers. A review committee from the task force accepted resumes from professionals requesting inclusion on the court-referred mediator list. Criteria was established for review of mediator applicants, and an appeal process was developed. The court-referred mediation program for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit began officially on April 1, 1985. At that time, the four McLean County judges hearing divorce cases began referring original and post-termination contested child-related cases to mediation. Cases involving the allocation of parental responsibilities, parenting time issues, relocation issues and financial/property issues continue to be referred to mediation. Mediators from the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Mediators Association help parties resolve family issues, in hopes of minimizing the time, expense and stress that would otherwise be spent on litigation.