

# THE NEUTRAL CORNER

## VOLUME 2, 2026

Keep Your Availability Current	1
DRS and FINRA News	2
DR Portal News	3
Mediation Update	4
Questions and Answers	4
Arbitrator Disclosure Reminder	5

### Mission Statement

We publish *The Neutral Corner* to provide arbitrators and mediators with current updates on important rules and procedures within securities dispute resolution. FINRA Dispute Resolution Services' (DRS) dedicated neutrals better serve parties and other participants in the DRS forum by taking advantage of this valuable learning tool.

### Follow Us on Social Media

Follow us on [Twitter/X \(@FINRA\)](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for the latest FINRA and DRS news.

## Keep Your Availability Current: Streamlining the Arbitrator Selection Process for Everyone

When FINRA notifies you that the parties have selected you to serve on an arbitration case, accepting or declining may seem like a straightforward decision. However, knowing what happens before that appointment can help you understand how your decision impacts the process.

### The Ranking and Striking Process: More Than Just Names on a List

The parties and their counsel invest considerable time, effort and strategic thought into the [arbitrator selection process](#). They carefully review arbitrator backgrounds, experience and disclosed information when ranking their preferences. Likewise, the striking process allows parties to shape the panel that will decide their case, often involving matters of significant financial and professional consequence.

### What Happens When You Decline

When an arbitrator declines a case after being selected through this careful process, it disrupts the parties' strategic choices. The case will be offered to lower-ranked arbitrators, which can feel like a setback after they have invested significant time in the selection process.

## Help Us Help the Parties

You can play an important role in minimizing these disruptions. If you know you will be unavailable to serve during a particular period—whether due to a busy trial schedule, extended travel, sabbatical, medical leave or other commitments—please notify FINRA so we can make you temporarily unavailable during that time.

We understand that circumstances change, and there are legitimate reasons for declining appointments. However, if you know in advance that you cannot serve, please let us know. This small step on your part makes a meaningful difference to the parties who have entrusted their disputes to the arbitration process and to the integrity of the arbitrator selection system.

## DRS and FINRA News

### Arbitration Case Filings and Trends

FINRA received 1,099 new [arbitration claim](#) filings from January through May 2026, reflecting a nine percent increase from the same period in 2025. Of the 1,099 new arbitration claims filed, 763 claims were customer-initiated and 336 claims were intra-industry. Customer-initiated claims went up by 22 percent, while intra-industry claims experienced an 11 percent decrease compared to the same period in 2025.

### Accelerated Processing for Parties Who Qualify Based on Their Age or Health Condition

FINRA amended its Codes of Arbitration Procedure (Codes) to add new FINRA Rules [12808](#) and [13808](#) that allow certain parties to request accelerated processing of their arbitration proceeding. To request accelerated processing, the party must be at least 70 years of age or certify that, based on a medical diagnosis and prognosis they have received, they have a reasonable belief that accelerated processing is necessary to prevent prejudicing their interest in the arbitration. A party is not required to disclose the details of their medical diagnosis or prognosis in the certification.

If the Director of DRS determines that the request complies with the requirements, certain deadlines

stipulated in the Codes will be shortened as provided in Rules 12808 and 13808. The rules also provide that the arbitration panel shall endeavor to render an award within 10 months from the date the Director determines that the case is subject to accelerated processing.

FINRA encourages arbitrators to be sensitive to the accelerated processing status when scheduling hearing sessions, setting deadlines, resolving discovery disputes and determining the reasonableness of postponements.

The amendments became effective for cases filed on or after March 30, 2026. Please see [Regulatory Notice 25-18](#) for more information.

### FINRA Investor Education Foundation (FINRA Foundation) Research Examines the Characteristics, Behaviors and Outcomes of Retail Investors Who Use Social Media

The FINRA Foundation released [new research](#) that examines retail investors who use social media and follow influencers to inform their investment decisions. The findings reveal that while social media successfully engages previously underrepresented market participants, these investors may also face elevated fraud risk due to knowledge gaps. Read the [news release](#) for more information.

### FINRA Publishes Latest Quarterly Regulatory Policy Agenda

The [FINRA Quarterly Regulatory Policy Agenda](#) for the second quarter has been posted. It outlines FINRA's current priorities for significant regulatory policy initiatives, active rule filings with the SEC and approved or immediately effective rule filings. FINRA updates this resource each quarter to provide transparency on the progress of the implementation of the FINRA Forward [rule modernization](#) initiative. FINRA identifies the priorities on the agenda through extensive engagement with member firms, industry participants and investors.

## FINRA Publishes 2026 Industry Snapshot

FINRA published its [2026 Industry Snapshot](#), an annual report that provides aggregate data about member firms, registered representatives and market activity. Key findings include: the profession continues to grow, dual registration is now the predominant model for financial professionals and U.S. stock trading continues to climb. Read the [news release](#) for more information.

## Practising Law Institute (PLI) Securities Arbitration and Mediation 2026

PLI's [Securities Arbitration and Mediation 2026 program](#) provides an opportunity to hear about the latest developments directly from DRS leadership, arbitrators, academics and experienced attorneys who represent both customers and industry parties. PLI's faculty will provide practical tips for arbitrating and mediating securities cases, including the use of experts in arbitration cases. Faculty will also discuss the latest hot topics and future trends in securities arbitration and mediation within the changing regulatory landscape.

The program will be held in person on September 10, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Time. Attendees can also watch the program as a live broadcast or view a recorded version. CLE credit will be available. PLI offers registration fee waivers for retired attorneys. Please see their [website](#) for more information.

## DR Portal News

### Download the DR Portal Mobile App

Managing your cases just got easier. Join more than 1,500 arbitrators who have downloaded the DR Portal mobile app and manage your caseload from anywhere.

#### Key Features

- ▶ Quick Sign In with Face ID, fingerprint or PIN
- ▶ Access case documents on your mobile device
- ▶ Stay on top of messages and communications
- ▶ Receive alerts for deadlines and milestones
- ▶ Respond to scheduling requests
- ▶ Join Zoom meetings directly from the app

- ▶ Review and digitally sign awards
- ▶ Submit expense reports

#### Download the App

- ▶ iOS (Apple): Available in the [App Store](#)
- ▶ Android: Available in the [Google Play Store](#)



#### Need Help?

[DR Portal Help Desk](#) | (800) 700-7065

#### DR Portal: Did You Know?

DRS recently updated the DR Portal with the following enhancements:

1. The Oath form has been updated to include an affirmation that arbitrators will not conduct any independent research regarding the case or any of its parties, counsel, witnesses or experts. Independent or outside research includes, but is not limited to, seeking information from others regarding the case, the use of internet searches, social media, legal research tools or artificial intelligence tools.
2. Also on the Oath, the question related to social media has been updated to require arbitrators to provide all social media accounts (personal and professional) regardless of whether the account is private or public.

For questions about logging into the DR Portal, please contact the FINRA Support Center at (301) 590-6500. If you have other questions about using the DR Portal, please contact the DR Portal Help Desk at [drportalhelp@finra.org](mailto:drportalhelp@finra.org) or (800) 700-7065.

# Mediation Update

## Mediation Case Filings and Trends

From January through May 2026, parties initiated 191 [mediation cases](#), a decrease of 12 percent from the same period in 2025. DRS closed 183 cases during this time, with approximately 81 percent concluding with successful settlements.

## Mediator Disclosure Updates

Mediators can update their profile at any time through the [DR Portal](#). Keeping mediator disclosure reports up to date—including the number of cases, case success rates and the types of cases mediated—helps parties during the selection process. References who can attest to a mediator’s skills and mediation style also help parties choose the most appropriate mediator for their case. Remember to include a cancellation policy if applicable.

## Become a FINRA Mediator

Do you have experience working as a mediator? Consider joining DRS’ mediator roster. Please email the [Mediation Department](#) for more information.

# Questions and Answers

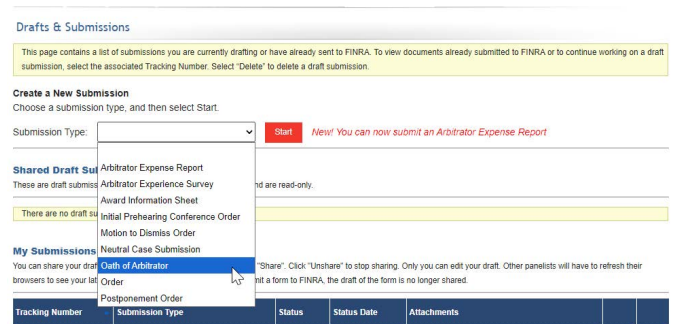
## Submitting Documents Through the DR Portal

**Q: I’ve been assigned to my first case and need to submit the Oath through the [DR Portal](#), but I don’t know where to start. Can you provide a quick tutorial?**

A: Most forms are on the DR Portal, so you will first need to log into the DR Portal. From there, follow these instructions:

- ▶ Navigate to the “Arbitration Cases” tab.
- ▶ Select your case.
- ▶ Click the red “Submit Documents” button in the upper right corner to open the “Submission Type” dropdown menu.

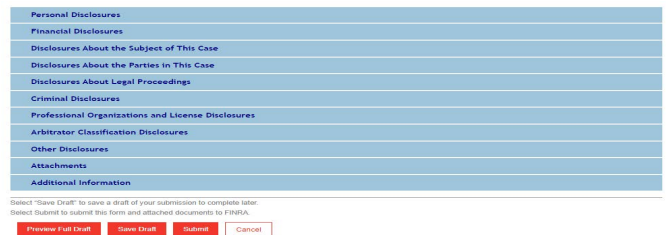
- ▶ Select your document type, *e.g.*, Oath of Arbitrator.
- ▶ Click the red “Start” button.



**Q: I see several questions on the Oath and the Arbitrator Disclosure Checklist (Checklist). Do I have to answer every question each time I’m assigned to a case?**

A: Yes, you must answer each question every time you are assigned to a case. Personal and professional circumstances may change as well as the questions on the Oath and Checklist, so we strongly encourage you to carefully read each question before answering them. After answering the questions (and providing any explanation when required), you will have three options:

- ▶ preview your full draft;
- ▶ save your draft for later; or
- ▶ submit it (the Oath and Checklist will be sent to the parties and FINRA simultaneously).



If you have questions about submitting a form, please contact the Case Administrator assigned to the case for assistance. Submitting your forms completely and on time keeps cases on track.

---

## Arbitrator Disclosure Reminder

Arbitrators should review their Arbitrator Disclosure Reports (ADRs) regularly to ensure all information is accurate and current. Arbitrators may not realize that DRS continually sends their ADRs to parties during the arbitrator selection process. Providing parties with the most current and complete information helps them make informed decisions when selecting their panel. Complete disclosures also minimize arbitrator challenges and case delays. Arbitrators should log in to the [DR Portal](#) to update their ADRs.

### Last Affirmation Dates on ADRs

The last affirmation date appears at the top of the ADR. This date indicates when the arbitrator last affirmed the accuracy and completeness of their disclosures. Parties may consider this date when making decisions about ranking and striking arbitrators.

Arbitrators can refresh the affirmation date by submitting an update form through the DR Portal or by submitting an Oath when assigned to a case. Even if there are no changes, arbitrators can update the affirmation date through the DR Portal.

If you need to register for the DR Portal or reactivate a dormant account, please email the [Department of Neutral Management](#) to request an invitation. Please include “request portal invitation” in the subject line.

## Directory

### **Richard W. Berry**

Executive Vice President and Director  
of Dispute Resolution Services

### **Todd Saltzman**

Senior Vice President and Deputy  
Director of Dispute Resolution Services

### **Katherine M. Bayer**

Senior Director  
East Region

### **Shannon Bond**

Senior Director  
Case Administration and Staff Training

### **Carolann Gemski**

Senior Director  
Central Region

### **Leslie Leutwiler**

Senior Director  
Neutral Management and  
Quality Control

### **Laura D. McNamire**

Senior Director  
West Region and Director of Mediation

### **Jisook Lee**

Associate Director of Neutral  
Management and Editor of The  
Neutral Corner

## FINRA Dispute Resolution Services Offices

### **East Region**

FINRA Dispute Resolution Services  
Brookfield Place  
200 Liberty Street  
New York, NY 10281  
Phone: (212) 858-4200  
Fax: (301) 527-4873  
[neprocessingcenter@finra.org](mailto:neprocessingcenter@finra.org)

### **Central Region**

FINRA Dispute Resolution Services  
101 N. Wacker Dr., Suite 2200  
Chicago, IL 60606  
Phone: (312) 899-4440  
Fax: (301) 527-4851  
[midwestprocessingcenter@finra.org](mailto:midwestprocessingcenter@finra.org)

### **West Region**

FINRA Dispute Resolution Services  
300 S. Grand Avenue, Suite 1700  
Los Angeles, CA 90071  
Phone: (213) 613-2680  
Fax: (301) 527-4766  
[westernprocessingcenter@finra.org](mailto:westernprocessingcenter@finra.org)

## Editorial Board

### **Matthew Anderson**

West Region

### **Khoi Dang-Vu**

Central Region

### **Makenzie Holahan**

East Region

### **Jennifer LaMont**

Case Administration

### **Carissa Laughlin**

Office of General Counsel

### **Cody Neftin**

West Region

### **Lauren Guerena**

Mediation

© Volume 2—2026 FINRA. All rights reserved.

FINRA is a registered trademark of Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. MediaSource is a service mark of FINRA. The Neutral Corner is published by FINRA Dispute Resolution Services in conjunction with FINRA Corporate Communications. Send all correspondence to Jisook Lee, Associate Director of Neutral Management and Editor of The Neutral Corner:

FINRA Dispute Resolution Services  
Brookfield Place | 200 Liberty Street New York, NY 10281  
Or call (212) 858-3999.

No part of this publication may be copied, photocopied or duplicated in any form or by any means without prior written consent from FINRA. Unauthorized copying of this publication is a violation of the federal copyright law.