

## As the Miami Legal Community Grows and ADR Increases, JAMS Expands to Meet Rising Demand

By Elizabeth Carter, Stacey Harrison and Henry Oquendo

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According to the Florida Bar, the Sunshine State has the fastest-growing legal population. As of 2024, the American Bar Association reported that Florida had just over 80,000 active resident attorneys. And within the state, Miami ranks third in national demand for attorneys, even ahead of New York.

As a hub for domestic and international business and trade, it is not surprising that Florida and in particular Miami are robust centers for the legal community. And as demand for law firms continues to rise, so too does reliance on alternative dispute resolution (ADR), which has become an invaluable tool for handling business disputes.

### Growing Preference for ADR Over Litigation

"Businesses and individuals in South Florida are increasingly opting for ADR methods like mediation and arbitration to avoid the high costs and lengthy trials associated with traditional litigation," explained Henry Oquendo, business manager at JAMS Miami. "There have been court backlogs with cases since the



pandemic, making ADR an attractive alternative for resolving disputes quickly and cost-effectively."

Prior to the pandemic, demand for ADR was already on the rise, and that trend has only continued. Much of this demand can be attributed to South Florida's booming real estate market and the region's position as a gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean, which has made Miami a hot spot for international business. With real estate market growth has come an increase in disputes related to contracts, property development and landlord-tenant issues,

while the international growth has resulted in more cross-border disputes. ADR has proven highly effective for resolving all types of disputes efficiently. In the case of cross-border disputes, ADR is favored due to its flexibility and enforceability under international frameworks such as the New York Convention.

### **Meeting ADR Demand in Miami With New, State-of-the-Art Resolution Center**

JAMS has been providing ADR services in Miami and Florida since 2012. More recently, the organization has opened a new, state-of-the-art resolution center in downtown Miami overlooking Biscayne Bay to address growing demand. This center, located at One Biscayne Tower, expands the services JAMS offers. "Our new center was designed specifically to meet our clients' needs for both virtual and in-person ADR," stated Oquendo. "The Miami center is easily accessible, offering 15 conference rooms, including a fully appointed arbitration room for international cases. Our clients are looking for the latest technology to support virtual and hybrid proceedings, including microphones, ergonomic seating, Zoom-ready televisions, scheduling panels, wireless printing, Wi-Fi and powered conference tables. This center delivers on what our clients want."

Being able to support virtual or hybrid ADR is particularly important for many international clients, as it enables parties to participate in mediation or arbitration remotely, reducing the need for in-person meetings. It also eliminates travel costs and time constraints. JAMS has a dedicated technology team that facilitates virtual and hybrid ADR sessions, making them seamless for all participants. The Resolution Center helps to simplify case management

with user-friendly tools and a software system for scheduling, document sharing and communication. To support a smooth experience for all parties, JAMS provides top-notch client support services, with case managers' assistance throughout the ADR process, from initial consultation to post-resolution follow-up.

And to best equip JAMS neutrals to handle disputes, an artificial intelligence (AI) assisted tool called CoCounsel provides advanced capabilities that streamline research, improve document review and ultimately save valuable time, improving the efficiency of panel member matters. To address the evolving use and impact of AI, JAMS has implemented an Artificial Intelligence Disputes Clause and Rules designed to meet client needs in a variety of situations.

"The new Miami Resolution Center continues JAMS' vision of providing the absolute best, highest-class case management and dispute resolution services to clients locally and throughout the world," stated Elizabeth Carter, Esq., senior vice president of the East/Central Region of JAMS. "We know the stress is high and the stakes are even higher when clients come into our space, which is why we are committed to ensuring they have the tools they need and feel at home as they work to resolve their disputes."

### **Experienced Panel Makes a World of Difference**

To provide clients with the most extensive choices possible, JAMS has a roster of neutrals with significant experience in international law, as well as deep knowledge of different legal systems and practices. The panel includes arbitrators, mediators and facilitators, many of whom are former judges and attorneys who

have worked in major international arbitration institutions such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the International Centre for Dispute Resolution (ICDR) and the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA). They also have deep knowledge of key industries across the state of Florida.

“Miami’s large Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking populations create a demand for bilingual or multilingual mediators and arbitrators,” added Stacey Harrison, vice president of operations for JAMS. “Professionals who can communicate fluently in these languages have a significant advantage. Currently, JAMS has two neutrals who speak Portuguese and Spanish fluently. By recruiting the best industry-specific neutrals to our panel, clients can select arbitrators and mediators that meet the unique needs of real estate, health care and international disputes. We offer efficient, cost-effective and culturally sensitive solutions that align with the region’s dynamic and diverse market.”

Oquendo points out that in September of last year, the Miami Resolution Center added Gilbert K. Squires to the panel. Squires, who also speaks several languages, including Portuguese, has served as an international mediator and arbitrator and has 25 years of experience handling global business, construction, and oil and gas disputes. Several other esteemed neutrals are also slated to join in the near future.

The JAMS Miami Resolution Center is an important resource for the legal and business communities in the region and internationally. “Florida is an unparalleled business commerce

center for the Southeast of the United States and is a vital connection to Latin America,” concluded Carter. “Miami is a fast-growing, sophisticated city. That is why we made sure the aesthetics of our new space, with sweeping views of the bay, reflected the global reputation of Miami. We are proud to support the regional and international ADR needs of this vibrant city.”

*Liz Carter, Esq., is the senior vice president of the East/Central Region of JAMS. She oversees regional operations for Resolution Centers located in 11 states, as well as JAMS Canada in Toronto. She works to identify and create new business opportunities and is actively involved in marketing and practice development initiatives for her region. She works closely with JAMS Global to implement international business development initiatives in her North American markets.*

*Stacey L. Harrison is vice president, operations at JAMS and successfully leads the Southeast Resolution Centers (Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; Maryland; Virginia; Nashville, Tenn.; and Florida).*

*Henry Oquendo is the business manager of the JAMS Miami Resolution Center and has extensive experience in the legal community. He works closely with the Miami panel and Miami associates.*

