

JAMS Opens International Arbitration Center In Houston

By James Mills

Law360 (June 12, 2025, 10:13 AM EDT) -- The alternative dispute resolution service JAMS is expanding the services offered in its four-year-old Houston office, announcing Wednesday it is opening an International Arbitration Center there.

The Houston International Arbitration Center is located in the JAMS office at 609 Main Street, a 48-story skyscraper in downtown Houston. The JAMS Houston International Arbitration Center will be available as a hearing facility for all international arbitrations, regardless of the administering body.

The Houston Center builds on JAMS' network of existing International Arbitration Centers located in the primary U.S. seats of arbitration, including New York City, Miami, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In a Wednesday afternoon interview, Houston-based neutral Michael Massengale told Law360 that opening an international arbitration center there has long been a priority.

"Houston is an important center for international commerce and disputes, particularly in the energy sector," Massengale said. "All kinds of commercial disputes come through Houston. We've got a particularly strong nexus to disputes that involve Mexico and Latin and South America. JAMS has a great reputation for its international arbitration centers around the country, and now we're expanding that network to include Houston."

Mexico's recent judicial reforms are expected to accelerate the use of alternative dispute resolution services, especially in complex commercial matters.

"Because of the new judicial reforms in Mexico where all of the previously serving judges have been replaced and they're moving to a system of judicial elections, there is a new focus on exploring mediation and arbitration in the Mexican legal community where there's been a lot more skepticism in the past," Massengale said.

Massengale reported he is the Houston-based neutral who is most actively seeking to develop an international practice but added the other five neutrals in the Houston office are capable of handling both domestic and international cases as needed. No special certification is needed for a neutral to move from handling domestic arbitrations to international ones.

"We likely will get more neutrals in the coming months, especially as the international picks up," Massengale said.

The announcement of the Houston International Arbitration Center opening comes just as Houston is hosting the prestigious Institute for Transnational Arbitration Workshop and Annual Meeting. The three-day conference brings together arbitrators from around the world. JAMS is excited to use this opportunity to show off its international arbitration center complete with all the latest technology.

"We've got first-class hearing space and conference facilities in one of the best downtown office buildings, convenient to where many of the big law firms and international practitioners are at," said Massengale. "We've got all the necessary facilities that people expect. It's modern, fully equipped, over a dozen conference rooms, premium amenities, state-of-the-art video conferencing technology. We're ready for international business."

JAMS was founded in 1979 as Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services. It now has 29 locations and a roster of about 500 mediators. JAMS CEO and President Kimberly Taylor is glad to see the Houston International Arbitration Center open.

"We are thrilled to welcome attorneys and their clients to this new facility, which will help expand access to international arbitration in Houston," Taylor said in a statement. "As Houston continues to serve as an attractive seat for international arbitration within the United States, we look forward to connecting the extensive bench of experience of our local panelists to the evolving needs of the legal and business communities globally."

JAMS first arrived in Texas with the 1994 opening of its Dallas office. JAMS offered virtual services in the Houston area for many years, then opened a physical office in Houston in the 609 Main Street building in February 2021.

Massengale thinks Houston will take off quickly as a site for handling international disputes.

"There's a lot of momentum that Houston deserves new attention and focus as a legitimate alternative among the leading arbitration centers in the world," Massengale said, "particularly in the United States."

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.