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Tonight: Clear with a low of **30**

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## News

### Durham center gets grant for prisoner re-entry

*Published Wednesday, December 15, 2010 7:00 am*  
by [Sommer Brokaw](#)>

DURHAM - The Elna B. Spaulding Conflict Resolution Center was recently awarded a \$10,000 Opportunity Grant from the JAMS Foundation to fund a pilot program for prisoners preparing for release.

Research shows that prisoner re-entry mediation is a promising intervention that works to reduce recidivism by helping inmates become acclimated to society.

The JAMS Foundation Opportunity Grant is meant to build on the success of a related foundation-funded organization in Maryland. The duration of the grant is one year.

"We will be using the grant money to help people who are transitioning from prison back into the community," said Grace Marsh, executive director of the center. "We'll be providing mediation services to them while they're still behind bars with anyone that they feel they need to mediate with, and we will be working on solutions that will ensure their success once they're released from prison."

The program will begin in Orange County. Marsh said they have been visiting the prison once a month to find out if anyone is up for release in six months and if they are interested in the program. So far, six prisoners have expressed interest, and about 17 mediators have been trained.

Mediation staff met with the six inmates to discuss their return to society. Then, the inmates had a chance to request mediation with those individuals prior to release. The plan is to sit down and mediate three two-hour sessions. Their goal is to roll out the program in full force by January.

"Generally, they're moving in with family, and we want to help them realize the limitations around their housing situation as well as mending any fences that may need to be mended as a result of their prison stay," Marsh said. "We just want to make sure they have the chance they need to talk with someone and to better understand how they're going to need to act and conduct themselves once they get out."

The Elna B. Spaulding Mediation Center was founded in 2005 to serve Durham. It is named after the woman who founded Women-In-Action for the Prevention of Violence and its Causes in 1968, the year the Rev. Martin Luther King was assassinated.

The Honorable H. Warren Knight founded JAMS in 1979. At the time, their panel included retired judges, and JAMS was an acronym for Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services. It has grown to become the largest private alternative dispute resolution provider in the world.

"We received several grant requests specifically related to prisoner re-entry mediation from different organizations around the country. We selected the Elna B. Spaulding Center for several reasons, including that it had a well-considered proposal and would be building on and expanding existing relationships, resources, training and materials," JAMS Foundation Executive Director Jay Folberg said in a release.

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