

Susan M. Yates

Susan M. Yates is a nationally-recognized leader in the dispute resolution field. An early proponent of mediation, she has been a mediator and mediation trainer since the 1980s. Susan has particular experience and expertise in dispute system design, mediation ethics, safety in mediation and online dispute resolution.

In 2024, Susan established Susan Yates LLC – working in the areas of conflict resolution and nonprofits. She provides consulting, training, coaching, facilitation, mediation and dispute system design services.

As Executive Director of Resolution Systems Institute (RSI) from 1997 to 2024, Susan developed RSI from an idea to a nationally recognized organization with a respected Board of Directors and a 10-person expert staff. As RSI Executive Director, she was responsible for articulating RSI's vision and for supporting that vision by charting a strategic path, innovating court ADR processes, developing a diverse funding base and managing a professional staff.

Susan is widely respected for her unique expertise in court ADR. She pioneered new ways for mediation to serve the needs of thinly resourced litigants, courts and communities, while adhering to underlying ethics such as self-determination, confidentiality and neutrality. She has worked extensively in dispute system design, helping courts develop sound programs for cases ranging from small claims to large civil litigation, from divorce to foreclosure. Much of her work focuses on the needs of individuals who do not have legal representation and on the potential benefits and pitfalls of online dispute resolution.

Susan is active on a national level in the dispute resolution field. She served on the Grants Committee of the American Arbitration Association-International Centre for Dispute Resolution (AAA-ICDR) Foundation from 2019 to 2022 and on the Editorial Board for Conflict Resolution Quarterly from 2003 to 2017. She has served in many positions in the Dispute Resolution Section of the American Bar Association (ABA), including serving as one of the ABA's two delegates to the six-person Joint Committee to Revise the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators. This was bracketed by multi-year terms on the Section Council. She is currently serving on the Association for Conflict Resolution's Taskforce on Safety in ADR, which promulgated Guidance for Physically Safe Conflict Resolution: A Bias-Resistant Approach in 2025.

Susan has conducted trainings that range from 40-hour courses to lunchtime seminars. Her specialty trainings cover topics such as advanced mediation skills, mediation ethics and online dispute resolution. Susan is a regular speaker at local, state and national

events and has spoken and trained internationally. She has co-edited two books on ADR, written mediation training manuals, designed competency-based training systems, conducted multiple studies and published numerous articles.

In 2024, Susan was honored with the D'Alemberte-Raven Award from the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution for leadership and significant contributions to the ADR field. In 2023 she was honored for 40 years of volunteer service to the Center for Conflict Resolution in Chicago. In 2020, she was awarded ADR Professional of the Year by the Chicago Chapter of the Association for Conflict Resolution; in 2016, she was named an ADR Champion by the National Law Journal; and in 2012, she was named an Ambassador by the Association for Family and Conciliation Courts.

Susan has mediated employment, discrimination, foreclosure, real estate, eviction, commercial, juvenile, housing, minor criminal and neighborhood disputes since she began mediating in 1983. She has been an adjunct faculty member in the schools of law at DePaul University and Loyola University in Chicago.