

Grievance Committee, Patrice Melluzzo



The Grievance Committee has the task of reviewing complaints and arbitration requests for completeness, accuracy and to determine if a potential violation of the Code or an arbitral issue exists. It's not a task that can be taken lightly, and I'm honored to say that you have a great group of people working on your behalf.

So, we've processed two arbitration cases, but didn't end up having any ethics complaints so far this year... But, as I'm sure you've heard – there have been plenty of informal complaints outside of the scope of the Code... business behaviors and practices that have proved troubling.

Our staff and ombudsman have dealt with many of these issues since bad behavior isn't covered by our code. Unfortunately, we aren't alone in seeing a spike in lack of business manners, so the National Association of REALTORS is in the process of forming a supplement to the Code of Ethics called the **Code of Excellence**. Still in development, we are hopeful that this tool may help [raise the level of professionalism across the county](#). We can expect Debbie Dwyer, who is chair of the National Professional Standards committee forum to provide us a report when this is released.

In the meantime, we can start today – play nice!

Professional Standards Committee Report, Sherry Street

There were exciting changes that took place this year, as a new option became available to members and the public who have complaints about a REALTOR® or commission disputes.

We rolled out an **Ombudsman Program**. This is an informal complaint process where trained Ombudsman can call and talk to two parties to try to verbally resolve a dispute. It's a quick and easy way to deal with misunderstandings, or when you're seeking a quick resolution, like a returned phone call. It also allows potential ethics complaints to be addressed before they are submitted to our grievance committee formally. The program was already taken advantage of three times this year and each outcome has been successful.

As you may know, we offer **formal mediation** as part of our professional standards process, which encourages parties involved in disputes to sit at the table with trained mediators, to craft their own resolution. We've held one mediation conference this year, which was also successful for all parties involved.

As you know, buyers and sellers are bound in our P&S agreement by mediation through the Dispute Resolution System - and we have an agreement with the Berkshire Housing Authority to handle those cases. Over the last three years, **DRS mediated between 4-6 cases annually**. The settlement rate was over 90%, which is slightly higher than their other case type. An **additional 4 cases** per year are referred to their Small Claims Mediation Program, because is funded through competitive grants, and therefore offered at no cost to participants.



What's very pleasing is that **we have not held any actual hearings** this year! It's great to know that these alternative, fast track options are working.

Hopefully you've had a chance to take one of our **Quadrennial Code of Ethics training** this year. We've offered many classes, both live and online, to ensure everyone has an opportunity to satisfy the NAR requirement to complete their training by December 31st. If you aren't sure that you've completed yours, please [view the COE member list](#), or call staff at the Board office. There will be a [webinar on November 21st and Sue will be teaching a class on December 2nd](#). Please make sure you attend training if you haven't done so already. If you cannot attend either of these programs you can do [pre-recorded online training](#) at your convenience through the National's website.

Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to thank everyone who volunteers their time to Professional Standards. I would also like to thank your two **Certified Administrators**, Sue O'Brien and Sandy Carroll. What a great group of people!!