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## The JAMS Foundation: Impacting Dispute Resolution for Twenty Years

### Forming the Foundation

More than 20 years ago, JAMS neutrals and associates in the company's Manhattan office witnessed with horror the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Fortunately, no JAMS staff died or were injured that day. But their experience, and that of their fellow employees across the country, galvanized JAMS to provide what aid it could to those who had been less fortunate.

To expedite this effort, the company launched the JAMS Foundation, in January 2002. The fledgling foundation's first grant allotted \$50,000 to the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, to assist victims and their families in filing claims and sorting through other related legal issues. Since then, the foundation's charter has evolved. "Our mission is to channel some of JAMS' financial success to help communities address some of the real challenges they face" says JAMS Foundation director David Brandon, "and to tap JAMS' deep well of experience and expertise in dispute resolution to help improve how societies manage and resolve conflict. The JAMS Foundation is a collective effort by the JAMS community to use its stature and resources to support people and communities across the country and around the world."

### Improving Policing with ADR Practices

Since its formation, the JAMS Foundation has supported several significant projects. Most recently, in response to recurring reports of violence and social unrest around events involving police, the foundation has focused on giving grants to fund mediation and de-escalation training for law-enforcement personnel, and to facilitate vital communication between police and community stakeholders to address sources of conflict, foster mutual understanding, and build trust. The foundation donated \$1,000,000 to the Divided Community Project at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law to provide public officials and community leaders with resources to avert civil unrest before it occurs, and to respond constructively to violent social conflicts when they erupt. It contributed \$450,000 to the Pepperdine Caruso School of Law to deliver conflict-resolution training, support interventions, and encourage collaboration among Los Angeles Police Department officers, community leaders, and parties throughout Los Angeles County. And it disbursed \$380,000 to the New York Peace Institute to train members of the New York City Police Department on mediation



and de-escalation, and to improve relations between law enforcement and local communities. Other grant recipients include the Center for Conflict Resolution in Chicago, which received \$50,000 for a pilot mediation program for police misconduct complaints; and the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan in Detroit, which received \$40,000 to sustain efforts to restore trust and improve relations between police and the communities they serve.

### Funding Mediation Programs for Kids and Adults

Of course, there are many other settings in which conflict management skills and dispute resolution services are greatly needed. Consequently, the JAMS Foundation regularly partners with other organizations to fund a wider range of ADR-related projects. For example, in cooperation with the National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM), the JAMS Foundation distributes mini-grants to

community-based mediation organizations to support the development of innovative and effective mediation programs. And, in collaboration with the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR), the JAMS Foundation offers more substantial grants to conflict-prevention and dispute-resolution programs for children in grades K through 12. The foundation has also funded the development of free teaching and training materials to introduce dispute-resolution concepts and techniques to students of all ages.

### **Going Global: The Weinstein JAMS International Fellowship**

To broaden its reach yet further, in 2008, a founding member of the JAMS Foundation, JAMS neutral Daniel Weinstein, conceived and partnered with the foundation to launch the Weinstein JAMS International Fellowship Program. This program, now under the JAMS Foundation umbrella, brings ADR practitioners (“fellows”) from around the world to the United States to develop their conflict-resolution skills under the tutelage of highly experienced JAMS neutrals. The fellows then return to their home countries, where they spread their knowledge, promote the use of alternative forms of dispute resolution, develop dispute-resolution programs, and implement ADR-related projects. Since its inception, the Weinstein JAMS International Fellowship has assembled a cadre of more than 120 fellows, from some 80 countries around the world, many of whom “are now working together regionally and

internationally, and providing both personal and professional support to their colleagues across the globe” says Brandon.

### **The Warren Knight Distinguished Service Award**

Finally, each year, the JAMS Foundation selects one individual or organization to receive the Warren Knight Distinguished Service Award, named for JAMS founder H. Warren Knight. The creation of this award in 2009, says Brandon, “reflected our board’s desire to honor the role Warren played in the creation of JAMS, the formation of the JAMS Foundation, and the development of dispute resolution as an avenue for the resolution of civil disputes outside the court system.” The award, which includes a \$25,000 grant, recognizes one extraordinary individual or organization for their commitment to preventing and resolving conflict in their community, and for their efforts to promote and advance collaborative forms of dispute resolution. Recent winners include the Alliance for Peacebuilding in Washington, D.C.; Hands of Peace in Glenview, IL; Braver Angels in New York, NY; the Convergence Center for Policy Resolution in Washington, D.C.; and Living Room Conversations in Boulder, CO.

### **Who Funds the Foundation?**

All this funding comes from just a single source, the JAMS community—JAMS neutrals, employees and the company itself. From the beginning, the JAMS Foundation recognized that accepting outside donations could compromise the company’s neutrality; for this reason,



the foundation accepts no financial gifts from external parties. Today, more than 300 principal benefactors support the JAMS Foundation, each of whom pledges at least 1 percent of their JAMS income to the cause. To date, the JAMS Foundation has received more than \$14 million in donations and has distributed more than \$11 million in grants and fellowships.

### **The Foundation’s Future**

Since its humble beginnings more than 20 years ago, the JAMS Foundation has grown tremendously while keeping site of its mission to help communities in need. In the future, says Brandon, “I look forward to seeing more people and more institutions engaged in conflict prevention and resolution, in as many ways and as many places as possible. On the ground, for sure, but also exploring the big, next-generation ideas about where we need to focus and what we need to do to help societies navigate the challenges they will continue to face.” He adds, “I hope to see all of us become partners in this work.” Whatever follows for the foundation, one thing is certain: If the next 20 years are as successful as the last 20, its future is very bright indeed.

*To learn more about the JAMS Foundation and its mission, please visit [jamsadr.com/jamsfoundation](https://jamsadr.com/jamsfoundation).*