WAMS

WASHINGTON ARBITRATION & MEDIATION SERVICE



Sam Pailca

MEDIATOR • ARBITRATOR

EXPERTISE AREAS

- Workplace, Employment & Labor
- Government and Organizational Conduct
- Civil Rights & Police Accountability
- Business & Construction Disputes

EDUCATION

- Mediation Training, Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, Pepperdine Caruso School of Law, 2025
- J.D., University of Washington School of Law, 1989 (Guest Lecturer, Investigation Practices & Cognitive Bias)
- B.A., Washington State University, 1986

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Sam Pailca's career spans more than three decades of high-stakes dispute resolution across government, law enforcement, and the private sector. She is known for pragmatism, empathetic communication, cultural fluency, and an unwavering commitment to fair process.

As the founding Director of the City of Seattle's Office of Police Accountability, Sam designed and launched one of the first opt-in mediation programs in the country for the resolution of citizen complaints against police officers, earning high satisfaction ratings from all participants. Earlier, as Director of the Labor and Employment Division of the King County Prosecutor's Office, she managed the resolution of disputes with approximately 40 labor unions and served as lead counsel in complex, professionally mediated class actions. Her reputation for impartiality earned her a singular distinction: the IBEW, one of the County's largest unions, selected Sam to facilitate its own contract negotiations with the County she was retained to defend.

At Microsoft, Sam served for nearly two decades as the ultimate decision-maker for thousands of workplace conduct investigations each year, spanning dozens of countries and every level of the organization. In her final role leading Microsoft's regulatory enforcement litigation practice, she represented the company at a mediation presided over by a former Chief Judge of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, negotiated consent decrees, and resolved employment litigation via mediation.

Sam is admitted to practice in Washington State courts, the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court. She currently serves in adjudicatory capacities for the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, King County Board of Ethics and Elections, King County Civil Service, and in past roles on the City of Seattle's Public Safety Civil Service Commission, and ALI Advisor.