

New JAMS office adds space, technology to ADR services

■ DAN HEILMAN SPECIAL TO MINNESOTA LAWYER

If you or a client has a dispute to mediate, a leading provider in that area might have just the place for you.

Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services Inc. (JAMS) moved earlier this year into a 6,000-square-foot space on the 38th floor of the Wells Fargo Center at 90 S. Seventh Street. The new location was designed to offer clients, neutrals and staff more space as well as updated video equipment and other amenities.

The office's previous location was 333 S. Seventh Street, the former Accenture Tower, now SPS Tower.

"We have been in Minneapolis for about 14 years," said Jonathan Moss, JAMS vice president of operations. "The continued need to grow with the market and the ADR needs in the city was the big reason we moved. We look at the Twin Cities as a hub for business, education, health care and technology. We recognized the need to expand in order to take on the business that we were getting."

The JAMS Resolution Center includes seven conference rooms, including a lockable arbitration room that can hold 20 people. Each conference room has technology to support virtual and hybrid proceedings, including microphones, ergonomic chairs, Zoom televisions, scheduling panels, wireless printing and power outlets in conference room tables. One conference room is a state-of-the-art mediation room that has the technology to host both in-person and virtual cases.

"The facility was designed to balance modernity with the amenities that support a comfortable, efficient dispute resolution process," stated JAMS CEO Chris Poole.

The Resolution Center also has a wellness room for nursing mothers, client lounge and café.

"We'd had this steady growth since we'd been in Minneapolis," said Moss. "But the growth wasn't just coming from the Twin Cities, it was coming from nearby counties and even surrounding states. We figured that the need to build a somewhat bigger office with more technology was important enough to go ahead with it."

The new 6,000-square-foot space is about twice the size of the former space.

"The layout at the old place wasn't as good," said Moss. "We would have had to tear it down to get what we have now. We wanted to be more in the center of downtown. Our former location was downtown, but it wasn't in the middle of where our clients tend to be."

These days about half of JAMS's cases are either virtual or hybrid, according to Moss. The build-out was to accommodate a growing need that didn't exist in pre-COVID days.

"It has some much more efficient equipment," he said. "If there are five of us in a room and you're elsewhere observing the room, the cameras automatically pick up the person who's talking. Nobody has to move to get in front of the camera. That flexibility hasn't been typical in the past."

Retired U.S. District Court Judge James M. Rosenbaum has been with JAMS for about 14 years, working on arbitrations, mediations, and some advising of lawyers on complex cases to the tune of about 20 hours per month. He said the main things the new JAMS space has to offer are efficiency and versatility.

"People are comfortable there," he said. "It's also easily convertible to both in-person and virtual proceedings. It can accommodate a number of people present in person, but in many cases more lawyers like to work at a distance."

Rosenbaum said that if one side of a dispute wants to talk without him present, he can leave the room and relax in a similar-sized room for as long as it takes until he's needed again. He said he recently worked on a case that involved many parties, but there was space for everybody.

"The county attorney and his group could be in one room, state of Minnesota's group could have its own room, the plaintiff group had its own room," he said. "When you walk in, it's not like a normal law office. It's like a series of conference rooms to accommodate the shuttle diplomacy that tends to be a part of ADR."

Founded in 1979, JAMS has a roster of more 450 neutrals and 29 locations, handling more than 19,000 cases a year ranging from two-party personal injury mediations to complex, multiparty, multimillion-dollar arbitrations in the United States and other jurisdictions worldwide.