





## What is Mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary process that offers parties an opportunity and setting to discuss issues of communication, separation, divorce, child custody, visitation and support, alimony, debt, division of property and other family matters. Parties will be able to share their views and have an opportunity to address important issues in a cooperative and constructive way. Our aim is to provide a collaborative environment in which parties can creatively address their needs and those of their children, and to assist in drafting and negotiating and drafting agreements to guide future relations.

### Is mediation confidential?

Yes! All matters discussed and disclosed are protected by the Court's policy of confidentiality. With the exception of the actual written agreement, nothing said or disclosed in mediation is allowed in court, and mediators may not testify. The only other exceptions are threats made by a party or alleged child abuse or neglect.

### Who participates in mediation?

- ◆ Parents and/or custodial adults
- ◆ Attorneys with both parties consenting
- ◆ Mediator(s)

### Who are the mediators?

Our mediators are trained professionals who help you identify issues, clarify needs, and consider options that help you to come to an agreement. Mediators are neutral and do not give advice or render decisions. Instead, they facilitate a positive discussion and provide an atmosphere that encourages consideration both of parties' realistic needs and the interests of their children.

### How can mediation help?

Mediation is a unique opportunity to speak with professionals about the family, to express concerns, and to resolve your case without the emotional and financial cost of going to trial. Mediation removes the unpredictability of trial, and it allows parties more time for trying to creatively solve problems. In this manner, mediation helps families heal and rebuild their lives, and it encourages future collaboration.

### What to expect at mediation:

The mediator leads a structured conversation about the issues in the case. The mediators will speak with the parties jointly and separately and will ask each party to document all issues involving financial terms. Sessions are usually two hours long and a case generally takes 3-4 sessions to reach conclusion.



### What to expect after mediation:

If an agreement is reached, the mediator will draft the agreement. The Family Mediation Program Branch Chief then reviews the agreement before it is submitted to parties for review. Clients are encouraged to request that their attorney review it as well. Once the parties approve the final draft, the agreement may be signed and submitted to the judge if it is a court case. Mediation agreements may also be merged into court orders. If an agreement is not reached, court-referred parties will return to the court process for trial.

### Where is the mediation held?

**Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division  
Court Building A  
515 5<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Room 102  
202-879-1549**

### **Tips for attending mediation:**

Parties should allow 2 hours for a mediation session.

Please do not bring children to mediation. The DC Court day care center in the main courthouse is available from 9:00am – 4:30pm if your child is at least two years of age and able to use the restroom without assistance. The phone number is 202-879-1759.

## How to Prepare for Mediation

You can prepare for mediation by doing the following:

- ◆ Complete an intake process with a Dispute Resolution Specialist.
- ◆ Consider the concerns and issues that need to be discussed.
- ◆ Arrive at least 15 minutes before your mediation session is scheduled to begin.
- ◆ CALL if you will be late or must cancel. Unannounced cancellations can lead to termination of the mediation.
- ◆ Be prepared to locate and bring in necessary documentation, including W2's, pay stubs, court orders, etc.

### Does mediation work?

Yes! In 2007, 94% of the parties were satisfied with the **Mediation Process**, 90% were satisfied with the **Outcome** and 97% were satisfied with the **Performance** of the Mediators.

