

What Is Mediation?

Mediation is a problem solving process in which a neutral professional (the mediator) aids communication between people involved in a dispute or who want a Court Ordered parenting plan. Access/Visitation mediation is available for 1) parents who want to establish a visitation or shared parenting plan, 2) parents who have conflict about an existing visitation or shared parenting plan, 3), people who have a dispute about a financial provisions of a Divorce Decree or a Parenting Time Court Order, or 4) grandparents or other relatives who want to establish visitation.

How Does Mediation Work?

Individuals who would like to schedule mediation contact Mediation Services and complete a Request for Mediation form. The Court may also require parties to participate in mediation. Mediation Services then schedules a mediation session and notifies all parties, by mail, of the date and time of this mediation session. Access/Visitation Mediations are held in the Mediation Services Offices, 373 S. High St., 3rd floor, Columbus, Ohio.

At the mediation session, the mediator will ask each party to present his or her view of the issues. The mediator may also ask the parties to discuss the needs of the

children and how they can meet these needs. The mediator guides the communication process so that all parties have a chance to be heard. Conflicts are discussed one at a time, and various solutions are explored. The mediator may provide information and help parties develop options to resolve the issues, but the final agreement is made by the parties.

What Are the Benefits of Mediation?

Mediation is a process that gives the parties the opportunity to resolve issues for the children and /or themselves rather than have a judge or magistrate decide for them.

The mediator does not make any decisions for the parties but helps the parties come to an agreement that works for them

Do We All Have to Participate?

Mediation is a joint, cooperative problem solving process, and it is necessary for all parties to participate. Parties work together, with the help of the mediator, to develop mutually agreed upon solutions.

Do I Need an Attorney?

The mediator focuses on helping parties reach their own agreements and cannot give legal advice. Attorneys rarely attend mediation

sessions. However, many parties find it useful to consult with an attorney, either before or after the mediation session. Attorneys help their clients understand the law and make informed decisions. If the parties reach agreement in mediation, they may want to make the agreement a Court Order. Attorneys can assist with this process.

If you would like your attorney to attend the mediation session, please discuss this issue with the Mediation Services coordinator several days before the mediation session. Mediation Services must give the other party an opportunity to invite his/her attorney to also attend the mediation session.

How Long Will Mediation Take?

The mediation session will last from 2 to 2 ½ hours depending on the number and complexity of the issues that are being mediated. Participants may meet for only one session or be asked to return for additional sessions.

Who May Request Mediation?

Individuals may request Access/Visitation Mediation if at least one of the participants currently lives in Franklin County, Ohio. Additionally, people who have a visitation, custody, shared parenting, paternity or Divorce Decree issued by this Court, may

request mediation for disputes related to that Court Order.

What Does It Cost?

There is currently no charge for this mediation program unless a Post-Decree Motion has already been filed.

The Mediated Agreement

Any agreement that is reached must be voluntary on the part of all the participants. No agreement is reached unless all participants are satisfied with all statements contained in the agreement.

Mediation agreements become legally binding if a formal complaint or motion is filed with the Court, the agreement is presented to the Court in the form of an Agreed Judgment Entry, and the Court approves the proposed Agreed Judgment Entry.

What Happens if No Agreement Is Reached?

If no agreement is reached, a party may file a formal Court action.

What About Confidentiality?

Mediation is confidential in that the only information the mediator provides to the Court is the outcome of the mediation. Nothing communicated in the mediation may be used against any party in any

Court proceeding, and the mediator cannot be required to testify about what was communicated in a mediation session. The exceptions to this confidentiality are that the mediator may inform the Court or report to proper authorities the following: 1) allegations of abuse or neglect of a child, 2) certain threats of harm to another individual or to oneself, 3) things said in mediation to plan or hide an ongoing crime and 4) things said in mediation that reveal a felony crime.

Can I bring a support person?

If you would like to have a support person attend the mediation, please discuss the issue with Mediation Services before the date of the first mediation session. Mediation attendees must be agreed upon prior to the beginning of the mediation session.

IF YOU NEED AN INTERPRETER, CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY
Childcare is NOT available. Do not bring children to the mediation.

For more information, contact:

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FRANKLIN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS DIVISION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS AND JUVENILE BRANCH



ACCESS/VISITATION MEDIATION

Judges

Dana S. Preisse
Jim Mason
Kim A. Browne
Elizabeth Gill
Christopher J. Geer

Karen S. Casey - Court Director