

# Mediation: Understanding the Basics

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## What is Mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary process in which people in conflict come together with a mediator and talk about ways to resolve the dispute.

## What is a Mediator?

A mediator is an impartial third party trained to help people find solutions that are agreeable to everyone involved.

## The Mediator

1. Listens to both sides of the story
2. Asks questions to help everyone involved understand and clarify what happened, how people were impacted, and identify what is needed to move forward
3. Helps people find a shared solution to their dispute
4. Does not take sides, give advice or place blame

## Mediation is Not

- A court hearing where witnesses are needed and facts are presented
- A process to determine guilt or innocence
- A counseling session

## Preparing for Mediation

- Write down what is important to you and what you would like to discuss
- Think about what each of you can do to solve the dispute
- Be ready to talk openly and listen

## Resolving Conflicts on Your Own

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### Talk Directly

If there is a threat of violence, talk directly to the person with whom you have the problem. Direct conversation is much more effective than sending a letter, banging on the wall, throwing a rock or complaining to everyone else.

### Choose a Good Time

Plan to talk to the other person at the right time and allow enough time to talk. For example, don't begin the discussion as the other person is leaving for work, after you have had a terrible day or right before you have to make dinner.

### Plan Ahead

Think about what you want to say before your meeting. State clearly what the problem is and how it affects you. Talk in a quiet place where you both can be comfortable and undisturbed.

### Show Respect

Respect means different things to different people. However, no one wants to be blamed or called names. Upsetting the other person only makes it more difficult to be heard.

### Listen

Give the other person a chance to tell their side of the conflict completely. Relax and listen; try to learn how the other person feels.

### Give Information

Do not interpret the other person's behavior: "you are blocking my driveway on purpose just to make me mad!" Instead, give information about your own feelings: "when your car blocks my driveway, I get angry because I can't get to work on time."

### Show That You Are Listening

Although you may not agree with what is being said, tell the other person that you hear them and are glad that you are discussing the problem together.

### Talk It Out

Once you start, get all of the issues and feelings out into the open. Don't leave out the part that seems "too difficult" to discuss or "too insignificant" to be important. Your solution will work best if all issues are discussed thoroughly.

### Work On A Solution

People cooperating are much more effective than one person telling another person to change. Be specific: "I will turn my music off at midnight" is better than a vague, "I won't play loud music anymore." Then write down your agreement and what each person will do.

### Follow-Up

Agree to check in with each other at specific times to make sure that the agreement still is working.