

## Mediation at Family Court Services

1021 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Room 350, Portland Oregon 97204 / (503) 988-3189

Multnomah County Family Court Services provides professional mediators who can help parents **develop a parenting plan** and **discuss issues** that impact parenting time and decisions about children.

### **What happens in Mediation?**

In mediation an impartial, professional mediator will help you and the other parent:

- talk about how decisions and time with your children will be shared,
- design a schedule for parenting time with your children, and
- create a written agreement that can become part of court orders in your case.

### **How can Mediation help me and my children?**

- Mediation **keeps parents in charge** of decisions about their children.
- Mediation **helps children by reducing conflict** between you and the other parent.
- Mediation helps parents avoid stressful, public, and sometimes expensive trials.

### **Is Mediation confidential?**

Mediation is private. The mediator will not testify in your case or talk with others about what happens in mediation. There are some limits to confidentiality where the safety of children or adults is concerned.

### **Common Questions about Mediation Appointments...**

- **Where do I go?** Come to the Multnomah County Courthouse on SW 4<sup>th</sup> and Salmon in downtown Portland. Go through Courthouse security screening. **Room 350** is on the third floor.
- **Is there Parking?** There is street parking. To avoid a ticket we recommend a parking garage. There is a SmartPark just south of the intersection of SW 4<sup>th</sup> and SW Taylor. We do not validate parking. Plan ahead for time to park and get through Court security – the line can be long!
- **What happens when I come to my appointment?** Most first time mediation appointments happen on Wednesdays. These appointments begin with a morning or afternoon Orientation to Mediation. For morning appointments, check in at 8:30 am. For afternoon appointments check in at 1:30 pm. **Immediately after Orientation, you will meet with a mediator.** It is best to plan to be at your appointment all morning if your appointment is at 8:30 am or all afternoon if your appointment is at 1:30 pm.
- **Who should come to my appointment?** Mediation is for you and the other parent or party in your case. You may bring a support person to the Orientation, *but* third parties typically will not be in the room when you and the other parent meet with your mediator. Children do not participate in mediation. **Please do not bring children to your appointment.** If you need childcare, **CourtCare provides free childcare for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.** It is best to call CourtCare in advance at (503)-988-4334.
- **What if the other parent does not show up for mediation?** If you have an open Court case mediation is usually required. You will be able to talk with a mediator in person about what to do if the other parent does not show up for a required mediation appointment.

### **What if we are not able to agree in Mediation?**

You are never required to reach an agreement in mediation. If you and the other parent do not agree, there are other options available to you, such as Court or seeking the advice of an attorney.

### **What if the other parent has hurt me or I am afraid of the other parent?**

In mediation, it is important that you feel safe so that you can talk openly with the other parent about plans for your children. If you have been hurt or threatened by the other parent, it may be hard for you to feel safe enough to negotiate or disagree with him/her. In some cases, mediation may not be a safe choice. *Information about your safety in mediation is on the back of this form.*

**Questions? Call us at 503-988-3189 or visit our website**

<http://web.multco.us/dci/fcs>

## **Your Safety in Mediation at Family Court Services**

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### ***How do I decide if it is safe for me to participate in mediation?***

You are the best judge of your own situation. Take a minute to think about these questions.

- Has the other parent ever physically hurt you?
- Has the other parent ever threatened to seriously harm you or someone you love?
- Has the other parent frequently insulted, cursed, or screamed at you?

If you answered yes to these questions or have other concerns about your safety, you may want to talk with a mediator at **Family Court Services** before deciding to take part in mediation.

***You can talk with a mediator at Family Court Services about your safety by calling us at  
503-988-3189***

### ***Will the other parent know if I talk to a mediator about my safety concerns?***

The details of your conversation with your mediator are not shared with the other parent. However, your mediator may have to let the other parent know about the plan for mediating safely. Your mediator is required by law to report information about child or elder abuse.

### ***Do I have to mediate if I do not feel safe?***

If parents have a divorce, custody, or parenting time case open with the court, mediation is required. However, if you have concerns about your safety you can request a waiver of mediation in **room 211** of the Courthouse **or** talk with your mediator about ways to mediate more safely. Remember, if you decide to participate, you can end mediation at any time.

### ***What if I want to mediate, but I am worried about my safety?***

Some parents that have experienced domestic violence still choose to participate in mediation. If you choose to mediate, but are worried about your safety, you can talk with a mediator about safer ways to participate.

### ***What if there is a FAPA (Family Abuse Prevention Act) Restraining Order in our case?***

If you have a FAPA Restraining Order or Stalking Order and the period when the *respondent* can object to it has passed, you can mediate at Family Court Services as a part of your custody case. If there is a no-contact order in a criminal or other case, you should speak with your Probation Officer, the District Attorney's Office, or an attorney about your order before scheduling mediation.

### ***Where can I get more help for my safety concerns?***

You can talk to a domestic violence advocate at any one of the numbers listed below. You can also talk with a Family Court Services mediator about places in your community where you can find help.

#### ***Domestic Violence Resources***

##### **Hotlines:**

Portland Women's Crisis Line ..... **503-235-5333** or **toll-free 1-888-235-5333**  
Línea UNICA (Español) ..... **503-232-4448** or **toll-free 1-888-232-4448**  
National Domestic Violence Hotline ..... **1-800-799-SAFE /7233 TTY 1-800-787-3224**

##### **Services:**

The Gateway Center for Domestic Violence Services ..... **503-988-6400**  
Volunteers of America Home Free..... **503-771-5503**

##### **Legal Services:**

Restraining Orders / Stalking Orders ..... **503-988-3022 Voicemail option #2**  
Legal Aid's Domestic Violence Project ..... **503-224-4086**  
*(Pro bono legal representation for low-income petitioners with contested restraining order hearings in Multnomah County. Call Tues thru Friday.)*