

What types of cases must be mediated?

- Dissolution of Marriage actions (all issues including child support, parental responsibility, distribution of property, alimony, etc.
- Changes in Parental Responsibility, Parenting Plans, and or Timesharing schedules
- Changes in Child Support

What are the benefits of mediation?

- In mediation, you have a better opportunity to control the outcome of your dispute
- By discussing your options in mediation, you may discover choices you did not know you had
- You have a chance to present your ideas in an informal, private setting and with the support and advice from your attorney if you have one
- Can significantly lower attorneys' fees and costs

What are the limitations to mediation?

- The mediator can not determine who is right or who is wrong
- The mediator can not provide legal advice
- The mediator does not provide counseling

Who will be present at the mediation?

- The mediator
- The parties
- Their attorneys, if any
- At times, a mediator trainee may observe or participate in the session

No other persons, including current spouses and other family members, may be present for any part of the mediation session without the mutual agreement of the parties.

Please do not bring children to the mediation.

They will not be allowed to accompany you to the mediation room and this office does not have child care facilities.

What do I need to bring with me?

- Receipt from Clerk of Court showing payment for mediation
- Completed information sheets mailed to you by this office
- Proof of all income if financial matters are at issue
- Any document you wish to discuss at mediation



If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in a court-ordered mediation, please contact the Trial Court Administrator, 301 McKenzie Avenue, Panama City, FL 32401, telephone (850) 747-5327; if hearing impaired, (TDD) 1.800.955.8771 or Voice (v) 1-800-955-8770 via Florida Relay Service.

The Fourteenth Judicial Circuit



Bay County
Calhoun County
Gulf County
Holmes County
Jackson County
Washington County

Family Mediation Program

Alternative Dispute Resolution Program
14th Judicial Circuit, State of Florida

Carol Dunaway, ADR Director
(850) 718-0059

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What is Family Mediation?

Family Mediation is a process in which parties involved in a disputed matter meet with a neutral third party, the mediator, in an attempt to resolve their differences prior to going before the judge.

The mediator is impartial and trained to help the parties talk about their needs and differences so that they can work things out themselves. The mediator does not make any decisions for the parties but helps them in reaching their own.

The process is meant to be informal and non-adversarial with the objective of helping the parties reach a mutually acceptable and voluntary agreement.



The mediator is not an advocate for either party, but a knowledgeable third person who helps the parties think creatively, find ways to get to the outcomes they need and come up with an agreement that is fair and equitable according to their own values.

Who qualifies for the Program?

To qualify for the Family Mediation Program the parties' combined gross income can not exceed \$100,000 per year. Gross income means the total income before ANY deductions are taken out. If the parties' combined income exceeds \$100,000 per year they must seek the assistance of a private mediator. The Family Mediation program can provide a list of certified family mediators practicing in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.



How much does mediation cost?

The cost for mediation through the Family Mediation Program is outlined below:

If the parties' combined gross income is no more than \$50,000 per year they will each pay \$60 per session.

If the parties' combined gross income is between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year they will each pay \$120 per session.

These fees MUST be paid to the Clerk of Court before the mediation can begin.

What happens at mediation?

The mediator assists the parties in sorting out the issues and concerns and explores alternatives for settlement.

If an agreement is reached, the mediator will prepare a written agreement for the parties to sign.

A hearing will then be scheduled before the judge or magistrate to review the agreement and if the Court approves, the agreement will be incorporated into a Final Judgment.

If the parties can not come to an agreement this is called an impasse. The outcome of the mediation will be reported to the court and a subsequent hearing will be scheduled.

Please set aside three and half hours for mediation. The typical mediation takes one session of 3 hours. On occasion, more than one session may be necessary.

Is mediation confidential?

Except for written agreements and as provided by law, the mediator keeps confidential the contents of the mediation session and any of the private meetings between the parties. Also, the mediator can not be subpoenaed to court to testify on behalf of either party.