

THURSTON COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT FAMILY AND JUVENILE DIVISION

MANDATORY PARENTING PLAN MEDIATION PROGRAM

Since 1987, the State of Washington has required separating parents to create a “**Parenting Plan**”, which will serve as the guide for continuing, joint parenting of the children. The plan is comprehensive and covers such issues as when the children will be with each parent and how decisions about the children will be made. You will need a parenting plan in order to complete your legal proceeding.

Mediation services have been available in the area for over ten years and many separating parents have chosen to develop the **Parenting Plan** in a Mediation session. If separating parents try but are unable to develop a complete **Parenting Plan** on their own, the Thurston County Superior Court may refer you to the **Mandatory Parenting Plan Mediation Program**. This also applies to modifications to existing parenting plans and paternity actions.

WHAT IS MEDIATION

MEDIATION is:

1. A MEETING between people to
2. DISCUSS ISSUES of mutual interest, with a neutral third party mediator providing guidance during the discussion.

Issues may include but are not limited to parenting.

The mediator’s job is to keep the emotional climate safe**and the discussion focused on the issues and interests. The result can be

3. A MUTUALLY SATISFYING AGREEMENT for the future; one that the two parties have developed and that they both understand. It’s the kind of contract that people keep.

WILL THE AGREEMENT BE LEGAL

The agreement is meant to be a contract between people and can be filed with the court.

WHO DO I CALL

Call the MEDIATION Department of Family and Juvenile Court at

(360) 709-3201

A list of mediators and costs, and a 10-minute videotape which describes the mediation process, are available at the courthouse.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK

1. Ask how much it will cost.
2. Ask what processes they use and be sure you are comfortable with them.
3. If you have concerns about personal safety, ask what measures might be taken to protect you.

WHY WOULD YOU GO TO MEDIATION

If you need:

1. A CHANCE TO TALK TO THE OTHER PARENT to
2. DISCUSS ISSUES
3. WITH A THIRD PARTY, a mediator, providing guidance during the discussion,
4. TO KEEP THE PROCESS MOVING.

Lack of communication can slow the progress down. Sometimes with issues like parenting, communication with the “other” party can range from “not difficult” to on a bet.” Mediation can help break a stalemate.

Although it is not mandatory, parties may agree to mediate other issues such as property.

WHAT ABOUT MY ATTORNEY

If you have an attorney, you will attend the mediation session on your own but should consult with your attorney before finalizing agreements.

WHAT DOES IT COST

Mediation fees vary. Most people pay their own mediation fees, but if mediation is required by the court, the court pays if a couple meets low-income criteria.

WHO SHOULD NOT USE MEDIATION

**If you are afraid for your personal safety to meet with the other parent, mediation may not be appropriate!

Entering Mediation should be discussed with your attorney, if you are represented.

Mediation is mandatory unless the court orders otherwise.

Talk to some mediators. They can help determine whether mediation is a good choice for you.