

Who can use family mediation?

Parties can voluntarily request pre-judgment or post-judgment family mediation if experiencing difficulty with issues of voluntarily requested or court ordered, temporary/permanent support (alimony and/or child support), medical insurance/service obligations, personal property distribution, custody, visitation/time sharing, all issues related to dissolution of marriage, married or unmarried parents, family members; OR the court can order pre-judgment or post-judgment family mediation of these issues at anytime during the court proceedings.

Please note: Family mediation is inappropriate if the case is currently being investigated for child abuse.

How much does it cost for mediation?

Fees are based on a flat rate for service but can be waived upon the court's determination of indigence. Flat rates are based on a combined joint income. If gross annual income is less than \$50,000, each party will pay \$60. If gross annual income exceeds \$50,000, each party will pay \$120.

What are the benefits of family mediation?

Family mediation costs are significantly less than litigation expenses.

- There is an emphasis on cooperative rather than competitive conflict resolution.
- It helps parties determine time sharing arrangements that best meet the emotional and social needs of their family.
- The mediation conferences are scheduled within a much shorter period of time than regular court hearings.
- All communication in mediation proceedings is confidential and inadmissible as evidence in subsequent legal or criminal proceedings, unless all parties agree otherwise or as otherwise required by law.
- Pre-judgment agreements are incorporated into the final judgment.
- Post-judgment agreements can be incorporated into court orders without a court hearing.

How can I find a mediator for my case?

Contact Mediation and Diversion Services by email at mediation@fljud13.org or phone at 813-272-5642 or obtain a private mediator. View a list of certified mediators for the state of Florida under The Florida Dispute Resolution Center Mediator Reporting System http://www.flcourts.org/gen_public/adr/brochure.shtml.

What is the process of family mediation?

During a mediation conference, a Florida Supreme Court certified, professional mediator assists the parties in reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement. After the mediation conference, the agreement is submitted to a Family Law judge for review and it is incorporated into a court order.

What happens if there is no resolution at a family mediation conference?

If the complaint cannot be resolved through family mediation, the parties have the option of going to court or seeking relief through other appropriate agencies.

Can the mediator give legal advice?

No, the mediator may not give legal advice. The parties are encouraged to consult with an attorney when legal questions arise. Mediation is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel.

Can I argue my case before a judge or general master if I'd like to change my final judgment?

All post-judgment family law cases must participate in mediation before a hearing can be scheduled with the judge or the general master.

What are some responsibilities of separated parents?

- Developing a workable plan that gives children access to both parents. If you want the respect and love of your children, you must allow them to respect and love the other parent. This means encouraging visitation with the other parent.
- Reassuring children they can still count on both parents, and relatives on both sides.
- Avoid the temptation to turn children against the other parent.
- Keeping on-going contact with the children so they do not feel rejected or abandoned.
- Providing and maintaining telephone contact with the children.
- Having children ready on time for the other parent.
- Being home to receive the children on time.
- Calling the other parent when it is necessary to be late.
- Rarely cancelling plans with children.
- Keeping parental communication lines open to constructively resolve problems concerning the children.
- Each parent establishing a home for the children with a place for their belongings (clothes, books, toys, etc.).

What behaviors should be avoided by separated parents?

- Pumping children for information about the other parent.
- Trying to control the other parent.
- Using the children to deliver child support payments.
- Arguing in front of the children.
- Speaking derogatorily about the other parent.
- Asking the children with whom they want to live.
- Putting the children in the position of having to take sides.
- Using the children as pawns to hurt the other parent.