

FAMILY  
COURT SERVICES  
MEDIATION OFFICE

*Why are we here?*

*What happens in Mediation?*

**Your Appointment Date & Time**

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## PURPOSE OF A MEDIATION APPOINTMENT

When parents separate, a great many changes occur, especially for children. Their world is turned upside down. They look to you, their parents, for answers to many questions: "Where will I live?" "Who will look after me?" "Will I have to move or change schools?" or "Will I still see both my parents?"

It is a time of questioning for parents as well. You may have hurts, anger, and feel a though you are on an emotional roller coaster.

It may be difficult for you to talk calmly with the other parent in order to develop plans to help your children adjust to the separation. This is particularly so when each of you has a different idea of what is best for your children.

In order to give parents a chance to discuss their differences and try to resolve them, parents with child-related issues must attend mediation. A mediation session lasts approximately one and one-half hours to two hours. With the assistance of a mediator, parents can develop their own written plan regarding the children. If you reach an agreement, it is signed by the judge and becomes a court order which is legal and binding on both parents.

In mediation, it is the parents, who make the decisions about their children. This is how it should be. You know your children and their needs better than anyone else. By reaching your own agreement, you prove to each other that you can work together for your children. The written agreement helps prevent confusion and misunderstandings that can create hurt and angry feelings.

Financial issues, including child support, are not dealt with in the Family Court Services Mediation Service. These issues are decided upon by the judge or with your attorney. For assistance with the support issues, please contact the Office of the Family Law Facilitator at your local district courthouse, or telephone their main number at 213-974-5004 between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

Feedback is very important and helps us improve our services. Comments/complaints should be addressed in writing to Division Chief, Family Court Services, 111 N. Hill Street, Room 241, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MEDIATOR

When you meet with the mediator, it will be in a confidential session. This allows you to explore options, knowing that if no agreement is reached, no recommendation regarding custody or visitation will go to the judge. It is the mediator's job to help you work together as parents. The mediator may meet with you together, or separately, may meet with both attorneys, and may even talk with your children.

Many parents experience a wide variety of intense feelings after separation. You may have a sense of loss and may go through a grieving period for the relationship. Painful memories keep surfacing. Trust may have been shattered and you may feel it can never be regained.

The mediator can help you cope with these emotions in a constructive way. He or she is neutral and does not take sides with either parent. The focus is on your children. During the session, rules for respectful communication are established and if these rules are not followed, the mediation session will be terminated.

A mediator will not make decisions for you. That is your responsibility. We will assist you in developing parenting plans that are in the best interest of your children, but ultimately, the decision is yours. To help you make these decisions, we may provide ideas and suggestions as well as information about the social, emotional, and psychological needs of children.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mediators are trained to understand the special dynamics of domestic violence. When domestic violence has occurred, mediators are required to arrange appointments at different times upon request of the party alleging domestic violence. (FCS 3181). **Please notify the mediation office of your concerns as soon as possible so individual appointment times can be scheduled.**

The person who alleges domestic violence may bring a support person to the mediation session. However, the mediator may exclude the support person, if the support person participating in the mediation session is disruptive. The support person is bound by the confidentiality of mediation. (FCS6303)

If your case involves domestic violence, the attached code section (FCS3044) may apply to your case.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

The two of you are the most important people in your children's lives. You each want to do what is best for your children. One of the best things you can do for them is to treat their other parent with respect. Remember, they love you both.

Children who experience conflict between their parents often do poorly in school and may develop problems in their own relationships. You can learn ways to help your children adjust to the changes in your family by attending the Parents and Children Together (PACT) program. You are required to attend this program prior to your first court hearing regarding custody and should attend prior to your mediation session. The PACT Program will help you. (Call 1-888-889-9900 for program times and locations.)

Be prepared to offer positive solutions during the mediation session. Good solutions help the two of you work toward common parenting goals and help establish trust, respect, and cooperation.

Children are not weapons, nor are they prizes. Please do not focus on "winning" or "losing" during the mediation. Rather, focus on how your children are "winners" when they see mom and dad working together.

Of course you have the right to agree or disagree with each other. In mediation you can ask each other questions, request information and share doubts and reservations before making decisions. All decisions in mediation are voluntary. If you feel pressured or uncertain, do not sign the agreement. Even though you both may compromise on some issues, you should be able to leave the mediation feeling that "this is my agreement".

## CONTENTS OF A WRITTEN AGREEMENT

Your parenting plan agreement deals with how you will make decisions about your children and when each of you will be responsible for their care. It can be as brief or as detailed as you wish, depending on the ages and individual needs of your children as well as the needs of each parent. Plans for holidays and vacations may also be included.

You may include other agreements you feel are important for the children. But remember, for there to be an agreement in mediation, both of you must agree. This means you need to listen to each other and work together, to the extent possible.

### A WRITTEN AGREEMENT BECOMES A COURT ORDER

If the two of you reach an agreement, the mediator will write it up as a court order and review it with you for your signature. Only issues that you both agree upon will be included. There may still be some child-related issues that you wish the judge to determine and, in that case, the mediator can write a partial agreement.

You will each receive a copy of the signed agreement before you leave the mediator's office and the original will be sent to the court for the judge's signature.

You have a 10-day period to review the agreement. During this time you have the opportunity to further consider the agreement and to consult with an attorney if you wish. If written objections are received by the Mediation Office from either parent or from either attorney, the agreement is canceled and does not become a court order. The mediator then notifies both parents that there has been a cancellation.

If neither parent nor their respective attorney submits a written objection before 10 calendar days, the agreement is submitted to the judge for signature. Once the judge signs the agreement, it becomes an enforceable court order that is legal and binding on both parents.

*If you have a court hearing scheduled prior to the end of the 10-day period*, the review period is shortened to the date of the hearing. The judge will sign the agreement on the date of the hearing. If you do not want the agreement signed by the judge, you must submit a written objection to the Mediation Office prior to the court hearing.

## COURT HEARINGS

If you have filed a dissolution, paternity, child support or other matter with the court, you must appear at any scheduled hearing. If you do not have a hearing scheduled, you must schedule a hearing (or take other steps) to finalize any pending matters.

**FAMILY LAW MEDIATION COURT SERVICES LOCATIONS**

111 North Hill Street, Room 113 Los Angeles, CA 90012	(213) 974-5425
400 Civic Center Plaza, Room 106 Pomona, CA 91766	(909) 620-3183
42011 4 <sup>th</sup> Street West Lancaster, CA 93534	(661) 974-7619
600 East Broadway, Room 273 Glendale, CA 91206	(818) 500-3160
300 East Walnut Street, Room 109 Pasadena, CA 91101	(626) 356-5685
9425 Penfield Street, Room 1200 Chatsworth, CA 91311	(818) 576-8565
6230 Sylmar Avenue, Room 331 Van Nuys, CA 91401	(818) 374-2337
415 West Ocean Boulevard, Room 316 Long Beach, CA 90802.	(562) 491-6272
200 West Compton Boulevard, Room 1002. Compton, CA 90220	(310) 603-3072
12720 Norwalk Boulevard, Room 308 Norwalk, CA 90650	(562) 807-7243
825 Maple Avenue, Room 100 Torrance, CA 90503	(310) 222-1701
1725 Main Street, Room 203 Santa Monica, CA 90401	(310) 260-1829
<p><i>For mediation on custody and/or visitation matters call Family Court Services (213) 974-5524</i></p> <p align="center"><a href="http://www.lasuperiorcourt.org">www.lasuperiorcourt.org</a></p>	
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