SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
FAMILY COURT SERVICES
MEDIATION OFFICES
213-830-0835

Family Court Services

Mediation Office



SCLAC FCS 017 Rev. 08/26
For Optional Use

PURPOSE OF A MEDIATION APPOINTMENT

Parents who are not in agreement about custody and/or visitation of their minor children must attend mediation prior to their hearing. A mediation session lasts approximately one to two hours. With the assistance of a Family Court Services Specialist in the role of a mediator, parents can create a parenting plan that is in the best interest of their children. If an agreement is reached, whether partial or complete, it is signed by the judge and becomes a court order which is legal and binding.

Financial issues, including child support, are not dealt with in the Family Court Services Mediation Office. These issues are decided upon by the judge or with the help of a financial mediator. For assistance with support issues, please contact the Office of the Family Law Facilitator at your local district courthouse, or telephone the main number at (213) 830-0845.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MEDIATOR

In Los Angeles County, mediation is confidential and non-recommending. This allows parents to explore options, knowing that if no agreement is reached, no recommendation regarding custody or visitation will be sent to the judge.

A mediator will not make decisions for you. The mediator will assist you in developing a parenting plan that is in the best interest of your children, but ultimately, the decision is yours. To help parents make these decisions, a mediator may provide ideas and suggestions as well as information about the social, emotional, and psychological needs of the children.
Mediators are trained to understand the special dynamics of domestic violence. When domestic violence has occurred,

mediators are required to meet with parents separately or to arrange appointments at different times upon request of the party alleging domestic violence (FC§ 3181). Please notify the mediation office of your concerns as soon as possible by calling 213-830-0835 so that individual appointment times can be scheduled if you desire.

The person who alleges domestic violence may have a support person present during 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 (FC§ 6303).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If your case involves domestic violence, Family Code section 3044 may apply to your case.

"OUR CHILDREN FIRST" PROGRAM

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 and receive an orientation to the mediation process by taking the online program.

"Our Children First." It is most helpful to complete the program before your mediation appointment. You are required to complete this program and file your certificate of completion with the Court prior to your first court hearing regarding custody. The program is available online 24 hours a day.

The mandatory orientation program, Our Children First, can be found at:

https://www.lacourt.ca.gov/pages/lp/family-court-services/tp/child-custody-mediation/cp/our-children-first

Participation in the orientation program is optional for parties involved in domestic violence restraining order cases, pursuant to Local Court Rule 5.19(b)(3).

CONTENTS OF A WRITTEN AGREEMENT

Your parenting plan agreement describes 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 age 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 non-financial issues you feel are important for the children.

If both parents 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 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 receive a copy of the signed agreement.

You have a 5-day period to review the agreement. During this time, you have the opportunity to further consider the agreement, and if you are represented by an attorney, they must review the agreement as well 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 5 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 5-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.

MEDIATION APPOINTMENTS

Most mediation appointments are conducted by videoconference or teleconference. Once you have filed for your court hearing, you are scheduled for a mediation appointment. If you are interested in making a voluntary mediation appointment (without a scheduled hearing, but with an existing Family Law case), please call the mediation office at 213-830-0835 (Press "3" to bypass the recording).

Parents must complete and sign an intake form prior to the appointment. The contact information provided will be used to set up the remote mediation session. You may also call the mediation office at 213-830-0835 to set up the session. Please call or submit an intake form as soon as possible after filing.

The Family Court Services Mediation intake form can be found at:
https://www.lacourt.ca.gov/pages/lp/family-court-services/tp/child-custody-mediation

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Your comments are very important and will help us improve our services. Comments or complaints should be addressed in writing to:

Family Court Services
Attention: Administrator
111 N. Hill Street, Room 241
Los Angeles, CA 90012