

MEDIATOR'S ROLE

A mediator is a neutral third party who uses conflict resolution skills and techniques to guide your discussion. Because the mediators are neutral, they do not make any decisions for you. Mediators may have opinions about what you bring to the table but they are trained to set aside their opinions and focus on helping you work out your differences and reach agreement. Your mediator will write up your agreement for you to approve. Mediators are also bound by confidentiality and cannot discuss your case with others.

Children should not be brought to the mediation session. Child care is not provided. Mediations are for adults.



CUSTODY ISSUES

What unmarried fathers need to know!

In Ohio unmarried mothers have sole legal custody of their children. Because we know that Dads want to see their children and be involved in their children's lives, mediation is offered as an additional service so that Moms and Dads can agree on a parenting plan. An agreement in mediation, approved by the Court, will define the rights of both parents.



BENEFITS OF A PARENTING PLAN FOR CHILDREN

- ✓ **Structure and Stability**—Improves structure which in turn improves stability and predictability for children's lives.
- ✓ **Protection**—Communication guidelines and ground rules help protect children from parental conflict.
- ✓ **Time with Parents**—Allows child to spend time with both parents on a regular basis.
- ✓ **Child-Centered**—Puts the child at the center of decision-making and planning.
- ✓ **Reassurance**—More opportunities for the non-residential parent's engagement in school, health, social, and extracurricular decisions and activities.
- ✓ **Consistency and trust**—Children need consistency, especially young children. Knowing they can rely on their parents to be consistent builds trust and self-assurance in children.

CONFLICT HURTS



Research shows that parental conflict is damaging to a child's emotional and psychological development. Some conflict is normal, but constant or intense fighting, arguing, blaming, accusing, threatening, abusing and screaming, takes its toll on a child.

A solid parenting plan can help cut down on conflict. Also, with the mediator's help, you can learn communication tools to help you have more productive conversations with each other.

MEDIATION ACTIVITIES

Mediation provides a safe place to speak your piece, state what is important to you and identify what you feel are obstacles to developing a mutually agreeable, workable plan. Some activities include:

- * Hearing one another out;
- * Generating options;
- * Brainstorming solutions;
- * Negotiating needs and wants;
- * Deep listening;
- * Finding common ground;
- * Compromising;
- * Setting conditions; and
- * Making trade-offs.

Working through conflict can also involve a decision to look forward, not backward. The goal is to create an agreement that will allow both parties to move on and help them work cooperatively in the future.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is a Parenting Plan?

This is basically a contract worked out between parents for how they are going to co-parent their children. It includes:



- ✓parenting times,
- ✓communication,
- ✓transportation,
- ✓access to information,
- ✓decision making and much more.

If parents are unmarried, once approved by the Court, the plan will also establish and approve Father's rights.

What is the program?

Clients meet together with a trained, experienced Court-approved Mediator at CSEA to create a parenting plan. The completed plan and supporting documents are filed with the Court of Domestic Relations where they are reviewed and signed by a judge. Once approved, it becomes a legally enforceable "contract" between the parents.

Who May Participate?

Anyone needing a parenting plan or to modify their court-approved parenting plan may participate as long as they have a case at Franklin County CSEA. The mediation must include parenting plan issues and cannot be only to talk about money issues.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What About Child Support?

Both parents pay to support their child and children are not cheap. The average cost for raising one child on an income of under \$59,200 is \$9330-\$9980, not including child care and health insurance. Both parents are expected to provide for their child. There are various ways to handle the support of your child, and it is important to decide how you will do that.

What can I expect?

Mediations are scheduled for two-hour sessions. There is a confidential, brief screening meeting with each parent separately. Parties then meet to work out a parenting plan with the mediator. Depending on the level of conflict and how detailed the plan needs to be, the session can take up to two hours. If necessary, a second session can be scheduled.

There are communication ground rules:

- ✓ Focus on the future;
- ✓ Avoid the blame game and fact wars;
- ✓ No name calling, yelling, or threats; and
- ✓ No interrupting

Don't worry about what the mediator thinks of you. It's not part of the mediator's job to make decisions about who did what or who's telling the truth.

What is the Cost?

There is NO COST!



Franklin County
Board of Commissioners
**CHILD SUPPORT
ENFORCEMENT**

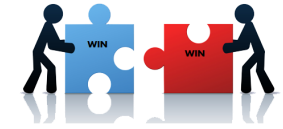
PARENTING PLAN MEDIATION



**Child Support
Enforcement Agency**
80 E. Fulton Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614)961-1832 (Mediation
Line) (614)525-3275 (General)

PARENTING PLAN

Benefits For Parents



- ✓ **Structure** - Establish a parenting time schedule, including a holiday parenting time and vacation time.
- ✓ **Communication** - Set guidelines and ground rules for communication.
- ✓ **Eliminate misunderstandings** - Describes how things will be done and makes expectations clear.
- ✓ **Paternal Rights**—Defines and approves.
- ✓ **Child Support**—Defines how parents will financially support their child/children..
- ✓ **Self-Determination**—No one-size fits all or cookie-cutter approach. Parties make their own decisions and decide together how their plan needs to be.
- ✓ **Accountability.** A Court-approved parenting plan is legally binding.
- ✓ **Flexibility.** As long as parents get along and are able to work things out, they can set their agreement aside and do as they wish, knowing that if things can't be worked out, they have a fallback plan they can follow.

