

## **Definition of Mediation**

Mediation is an assisted conversation with the goal of creating understanding and reaching an agreement.

Some characteristics of the mediation process are that it is voluntary, collaborative and confidential. In addition, it supports self-responsibility and self-empowerment.

## **Role of the Mediator**

As the mediator I remain neutral and impartial. I don't give advice or make decisions about the issues. My job is to facilitate the process so parties hear each other not only in terms of the "story" but also in terms of the significant values and needs of each participant. I also assist in drafting the agreements deemed to best benefit all parties.

## **Process of Mediation**

### **Prior to meeting**

Prior to meeting together, I contact each of the parties. I ask all parties what their intentions and greatest concerns are. I suggest participants prepare for mediation by reflecting on intentions and desired outcomes. I also ask parties to read and sign an Agreement to Mediate.

### **During the meeting**

- During the first part of our meeting together, I will make some introductory remarks, set the time frame, review the guidelines and define the protocol.
- Secondly, we begin the mediation process. Each party has an opportunity to express her/his view of the situation and how each would like to resolve the conflict. I endeavor to assure that all parties are heard to their satisfaction.

I may ask clarifying questions to surface concerns related to the issues. I will also summarize what I have heard and ask for corrections and refinements from the parties.

Sometimes, I will choose to meet with parties separately in a caucus during the mediation.

I will lay out the common ground I see and define the issues that have surfaced.

- The third phase of the process moves to collaborative problem solving and ultimately, a written agreement.

As mediator, I facilitate looking at the issues, requests and needs on the table to prioritize them.

Focusing on one issue at a time, participants brainstorm and negotiate solutions.

- In the final step, solutions are written up as an agreement and signed by all parties. I assist, as needed, in the preparation of this document so that it is clear and easy to use.

Ideally all this can take place in one meeting, but second or third meetings are sometimes needed to conclude the process.