

How to Make Your Mediation Successful

Preparation

There are some things you can do before your mediation to make sure it is a positive experience. Take a few moments to look this over and call us at 1-800-692-2540 if you have any questions or concerns. We will be happy to talk with you.

Remember that mediation is a chance to solve problems in a different way. Finding fault, fixing blame and making accusations sidetrack the mediation process. As hard as it can be to do so, try your best to focus on the future and the needs of the student.

The enclosed confirmation letter tells you the date, time and place of your mediation. This letter has been sent only to the people named at the top. If there are others listed on the confirmation letter who will be coming to the mediation, please notify them of the date, time and place as they have not received a letter.

Participant Roles

The students' needs are the topic of the mediation. As such, parents and school district representatives are the primary participants and will be expected to speak on their own behalves, doing most of the talking. We recognize however, that supporters* often have valuable information to share. If you are

bringing others to the mediation, please keep in mind their roles as *support people*. They are there to provide you with information that helps you to problem-solve around the needs of the student. We encourage you to consult with support people privately, and to call a break if you need time to do so.

* Attorneys, advocates and others with specific expertise

Time Spent At Mediation

You should plan to spend a full day in mediation. Generally, mediations last anywhere from 6 to 9 hours, and sometimes if an agreement is within reach, people agree to stay even longer. Since there is not always time to stop for lunch, bring lunch and/or snacks that will get you through the day. Eating a good breakfast and getting a good night's sleep will also be helpful.

Presentation, Negotiation & Resolution

In the early part of the mediation you will be asked to present your issues, concerns and goals for the mediation. It is helpful to summarize, ahead of time, your perspective of the problem, your reasons for coming to mediation, and your goals for the mediation. This summary will give the mediator a better idea about the student and his or her needs, the challenges you have been experiencing, and what you hope to accomplish by meeting. Keep these things in mind when preparing your summary:

- Define the problem as you see it. What is your understanding of what is involved? With what do you agree? With what do you disagree? What would you like to be different?
 - Describe what you want, and/or what you are proposing.
 - Describe the needs of the student and how what you are proposing meets the student's needs.
- Come to mediation ready to work cooperatively. This means:
- Share information that will help to clarify and resolve the problem.
 - Show a willingness to listen to the information shared by others.
 - Keep an open mind. There are usually *many* solutions to a problem. Give yourself permission to be creative and to thoroughly explore options.
 - Only agree to what you can live with. Don't make agreements you don't intend to keep.
- Hundreds of parents and school district personnel have been able to work together cooperatively in mediation. We commend you for choosing mediation to help you resolve your dispute!

Preparing For Your Special Education Mediation



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OPTIONS
GROUP

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What is Mediation?

Mediation is the intervention into a dispute by a neutral third person called a “mediator”. The mediator helps people talk and listen to each other in ways that promote problem-solving.

Unlike an arbitrator or a judge, a mediator does not decide how to resolve things. The people involved in the dispute work together to resolve the problem. The agreements that are reached in mediation belong to the people most directly involved and must be satisfying to everyone.

As neutrals, mediators do not “advocate” for either school districts or parents. They also do not disclose to others what happens in the mediation. Mediation is “confidential”.

If you have any further questions about mediation or about what to expect when you get there, we will be happy to talk with you. Please call us at (800) 692-2540 or email karend@soundoptionsgroup.com.

Sound Options Group, L.L.C., is an affiliation of professionals dedicated to the effective and durable resolution of conflict through mediation, facilitation and skill development training.