

What is Mediation?

When parents and school personnel disagree about the education needs for a student with disabilities, either of them may request mediation.

In mediation an impartial, third party mediator assists by helping parents and school personnel clarify the challenge, explore interests, discuss options and reach mutually satisfying agreements that address the needs of the student. The mediator does not decide how to resolve the dispute. Agreements are documented in writing and signed by all parties.

This informal, collaborative problem-solving meeting often becomes the basis for positive working relationships between parents and school personnel.

Mediation is:

- **Voluntary**
- **Confidential**
- **Timely**

The high percentage of resolutions resulting from mediations indicates that parents and school personnel are using it successfully. And, while mediation is an alternative to a due process hearing, participating in mediation does not delay or deny anyone's right to a due process hearing.

Who pays for Mediation?

Special education mediation services are available at no charge to parents or school districts. The State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction pays for mediation services.

Where are Mediations Held?

Mediations occur statewide and are scheduled in a timely manner in a location that is convenient to the parties. Examples of meeting places include schools, district offices, or libraries.

What are the Mediators' Qualifications?

Specially trained mediators have:

- Training in state and federal laws and regulations related to the education of students with disabilities;
- Education and training in conflict resolution, collaborative problem-solving and communication.



How Do We Initiate Mediation?

Call the Sound Options Group at the number on the front of this brochure. A case manager will talk with you and offer to contact the other party to inquire into their interest in mediation. Once there has been an agreement to mediate, we will help schedule the mediation in a timely manner and in a location that is convenient for the parties. We will then assign a mediator and send the parent and special education director a written confirmation of the mediation.

Special education issues may be complex at times. Therefore, it is essential that participants set aside a **full day** for the mediation.



Who Participates in Mediation?

Participants in mediation are typically parents, the school district special education director and others who work closely with the student.

What Can Mediation Do?

- Promote positive working relationships between parents and school personnel;
- Resolve disagreements concerning the identification, evaluation or educational placement of a student;
- Encourage mutual problem solving;
- Help parents and school personnel focus on what they have in common: the student.

How Do I Find a Mediator?

To request mediation or for more information call:

Sound Options Group, LLC

Administrative Agents for
Office of Superintendent of Public
Instruction.

(800) 692-2540 (WA State)
(206) 842-2298 (Seattle Area)

(206) 780-5776 (FAX)

mail@somtg.com

Washington State Relay Service:
(800) 833-6388 (TDD)
(800) 833-6384 (Voice)

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.

MEDIATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Parents and School Systems
Working Together



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