

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 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 with the date, time and location 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 a solution 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 help.

Presentation, Negotiation & Resolution

In the early part of the mediation you will be asked to present your concerns and goals for the mediation. Therefore, it helps 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:

- Describe the problem as you experience it and any attempts you've made to get the problem resolved. Where does the disagreement appear to be? Are there things you *do* agree upon?
- Describe what you want and/or how what you are proposing addresses the needs of the student.

Please come to mediation ready to work cooperatively. This means:

- Share all relevant information.
- 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 thoroughly explore options.
- Only agree to what you can live with.

We commend you for choosing mediation to help you resolve your dispute.

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. Instead, the people most directly involved in the dispute work together to find ways to solve 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. Instead, they work to keep the discussion focused on the needs of the student. Also, mediators do not disclose to others what happens in the mediation. Thus, mediation is confidential.

If you have any further questions about mediation or what to expect when you get there, we will be happy to talk with you. Please call us at the number on the front of this brochure.

Thank you for choosing Sound Options Group, L.L.C.

Sound Options Mediation & Training 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.

Preparing For Special Education Mediation

Parents and School Systems
Working Together

Sound Options Group, L.L.C.
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