

MEDIATION PROGRAM (Dispute Resolution System)

What is mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary, confidential, and non-adversarial method of settling disputes in which a neutral party assists the parties in negotiating a mutually beneficial settlement.

What are the benefits?

The primary benefit of mediation is a fair resolution of differences, but mediation is also:

- Quick – process is not lengthy
- Confidential
- Cost-effective – it costs far less than litigation
- Flexible – parties set their own schedule to mediate
- Expert – Mediators are Supreme Court trained
- Gentle – parties can maintain a relationship
- Risk free – anyone can leave at any time

Mediation allows the parties to retain control of the situation and promotes communication. The parties themselves decide the outcome (a win-win process).

What are the goals of the City's Mediation Program?

- To provide a comprehensive Dispute Resolution System (DRS) by integrating the use of mediation with established grievance process.
- To provide a DRS which strikes a balance between employees and management.
- To focus on cost-effective prevention and informal channels for resolution in the early stages of a conflict.

When is mediation used?

Mediation is used to resolve non-disciplinary, work-related conflicts/disputes. Employees and supervisors are encouraged to discuss and resolve work-related disputes. If discussions do not satisfactorily resolve staff concerns, they are encouraged to use the mediation process.

Who may participate?

Participation is voluntary for all parties. All city employees are covered by, and may be eligible for mediation services.

Any employee who is a party to a workplace dispute, may request mediation services by filing a "Request for Mediation" with the DRS Coordinator. The City Manager, Chief of Staff, Deputy City Manager, or Agency Director may also refer parties to mediation.

What kinds of disputes can be mediated?

Supervisor/employee differences on issues of:

- Respect/general treatment
- Workload and assignments
- Environmental issues – location
- Resources – space & equipment
- Work schedule
- EEO issues

Employer/employee differences on issues of:

- General treatment of each other
- Workload
- Workspace
- Shared use of resources
- EEO issues

What is expected of the parties?

Parties are expected to be open and honest; respect the confidentiality of the process; and communicate in good faith.

Who is a mediator?

- A Human Resources staff member trained to help resolve conflict/disputes.
- VA Supreme Court Certified as a Mediator. ***Not all are yet certified, however all Mediators have completed the VA Supreme Court course requirements.***
- Bound to confidentiality by State law.
- Neutral party with no vested interest in the outcome.

What are the steps in the mediation process?

- Party files a “Request to Mediate” form
- Intake and evaluation assessment is completed
- All parties are notified
- Mediator is selected
- Mediation session is scheduled
- Mediation session is conducted
- Mediation is concluded when one of the following occurs:
 - Agreement is reached
 - Request to mediate is withdrawn
 - Party requests a termination
 - Parties reach an impasse

How do I get more information on mediation?

Mediation is a program administered by the Department of Human Resources. Request additional information by email at askHR or 646-5660.