

The Mediation & Diversion Services Program

Community Mediation

Mediation touches people in all walks of life. Established originally as the Citizen Dispute Settlement Program in 1978, staff mediated civil complaints and neighborhood disputes. The services were offered to the public as an alternative to the formal judicial process and to assist the court in reducing the caseload. Community Mediation is a program of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Community Mediation Program is supported by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners for the residents of Hillsborough County.

The Following Provides a Brief Description of Additional Court Programs Housed in Mediation & Diversion Services:

County Civil Diversion:

Small Claims and County Civil matters court ordered to mediation. The court may refer a matter to mediation at the parties request.

Family Diversion:

Family matters are Court Ordered, or an individual may initiate their own request for mediation on an existing court case. Frequently handled matters are: Child Support, Alimony, Visitation and Custody.

Dependency:

Dependency mediation is the mediation of disputes arising from allegations of abuse, abandonment, or neglect of a child. These disputes typically result in a court case brought by the Department of Children and Families under Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes.

MEDIATION & DIVERSION SERVICES

Mission Statement

To provide high quality, professional mediation services for Hillsborough County disputants, at a reasonable cost, in a cordial and comfortable environment.

To serve the Court and the community in the resolution of disputes in a timely and efficient manner, and to instill confidence and satisfaction in all those we serve.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Administrative Office of the Courts Mediation & Diversion Services

800 E. Twiggs Street, Suite 208

Tampa, FL 33602

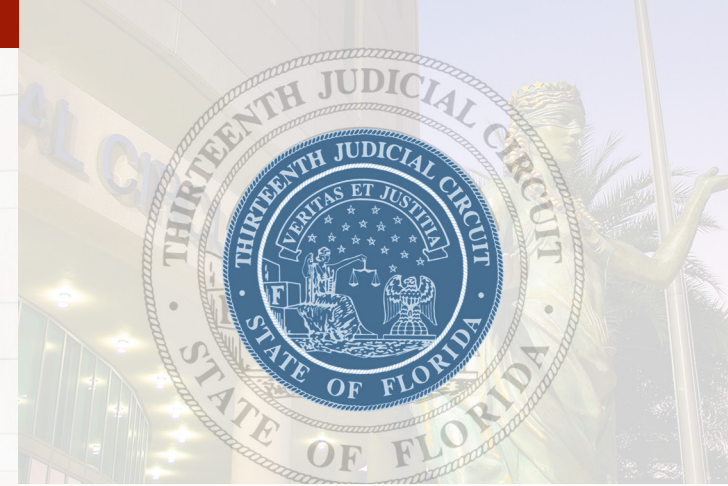
Phone: (813) 272-5642

Fax: (813) 301-3705

E-mail: mediation@fljud13.org

**Learn more about the
Thirteenth Judicial Circuit at:**
[www.fljud13.org/CourtPrograms/
MediationDiversionServices.aspx](http://www.fljud13.org/CourtPrograms/MediationDiversionServices.aspx)

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS

Community Mediation Program



www.fljud13.org

What is the Community Mediation Program?

The Community Mediation Program offers a forum for resolving conflicts prior to a matter being filed in court. Mediation is a complement to the court system. It does not prohibit the parties from filing their case in court should the matter not be resolved. A neutral third party, called a mediator, assists parties in discussing the issues at hand in an attempt to reach a resolution.

Is Mediation the Same as Going to Court?

Mediation is an informal process. The Program does not provide legal advice or representation. Mediation allows the parties to discuss the issues informally and in their own words. The parties voluntarily participate in the mediation. The court, however, does not have jurisdiction in the matter.

Initiating the Process

Individuals/Businesses wishing to request a mediation conference can do so in person, email (mediation@fljud13.org), mail or fax. The name, address, and phone number of the parties involved must be provided when mediation is requested. A brief statement describing the issue(s) to be mediated must be provided in the request. The Request Form can be found at <https://www.fljud13.org/Portals/0/Forms/pdfs/communityrequestform.pdf>. The Court, however, does not have jurisdiction in the matter.

Types of Complaints

Almost any dispute may be considered appropriate including certain misdemeanor criminal matters (normally referred by a law enforcement office) for the Community Mediation Program.

Examples of normally acceptable complaints are:

- Animal Nuisance
- Balances Owed
- Consumer Issues
- Contract Issues
- Damages
- Family Disputes
- Landlord/Tenant (not evictions)
- Neighborhood Disputes
- Unsatisfactory Services
- Unpaid Wages
- Worthless Checks

What Occurs During a Mediation Conference?

Only the parties directly involved in the disputed matter are permitted to attend the mediation conference. The mediator facilitates the mediation conference at all times and explains the required procedures for the conference prior to beginning the discussion.

What Happens if an Agreement Is Reached?

Disputes resolved through mediation eliminate the need for a formal court hearing which reduces the time and expense involved to the parties. When a mutually acceptable agreement is reached the mediator prepares a written document reflecting what the parties have agreed to for their signature. Each party is provided with a copy of the agreement for their records.



What Happens if an Agreement Is Not Reached?

In approximately 80% of the conferences held, the parties reach an agreement. Should an agreement not be reached, or the responding party does not appear, the referring party can consider filing a formal lawsuit.

Can Anything I Say Be Used Against Me?

All information obtained during the mediation process, which includes information obtained by the Program, is confidential pursuant to 44.401, 44.201 (5) Florida Statutes.

What Are the Advantages of Mediation?

- There is no charge for the service.
- Conferences are normally held within two weeks of filing.
- Attorneys are not required.
- Parties actively participate in the mediation process.
- Parties decide the outcome of the mediation conference.
- Information is confidential.
- Ongoing contact/relationships with participants are preserved.

