

What Is Mediation and Diversion Services?

Mediation touches people in all walks of life, ranging from issues such as neighborhood arguments to dissolution of marriage. 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.

The following provides a brief description of additional court programs housed in Mediation & Diversion Services:

CIRCUIT CIVIL DIVERSION:

Circuit Civil matters are court ordered to mediation or arbitration. Cases may be referred at the request of the parties.

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 walk in to initiate their own case. Frequently handled matters are: Child Support, Alimony, Visitation and Custody.

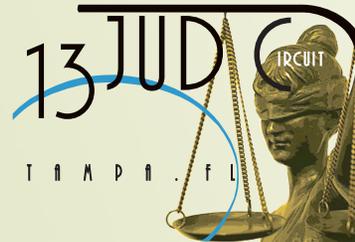
Mission Statement

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.



Persons with disabilities needing a special accommodation to participate in mediation should contact the Tampa Office.



For Information Call

TAMPA OFFICE
Tel: (813) 272-5642
Email: mediation@fjud13.org

COMMUNITY MEDIATION PROGRAM

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida
Mediation & Diversion Services



Makes the Connection!

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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 and in attempting to reach a possible solution to the problem.

Is Mediation The Same As Going To Court?

Mediation is not a formal court process. The Program does not provide legal advice or representation. Mediation allows the parties to discuss the issues informally and in their own words. Parties are not court ordered to participate in the mediation conference nor subpoenaed to attend.

What Types Of Complaints Can Be Filed?

Almost any case appropriate for Small Claims, County Civil, Circuit Civil, and certain misdemeanor criminal matters (normally referred by a law enforcement office) can be filed through the Community Mediation Program. Cases found inappropriate for mediation will be referred to court or to another appropriate agency.

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 Are The Procedures For Filing?

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 is obtained from the individual requesting the conference, which is considered their side or version to the dispute. Detailed specifics are not discussed until the actual conference.

What Occurs During A Mediation Conference?

Only the parties directly involved in the disputed matter are allowed to attend the mediation conference. Witnesses seldom participate in a conference and only when determined necessary by the mediator. The mediator is in control of 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 contract 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 matter can be pursued in a formal court process or through another agency, if more appropriate.

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.
- Conferences usually start within 15 minutes of scheduled time.
- Attorneys are not required.
- Parties actively participate in the mediation process.
- Parties decide the outcome of the mediation conference.
- Information is confidential.

For Further Information Regarding

The Community Mediation Program
Call (813) 272-5642 or
Email us at mediation@fljud13.org