

Mediation of Parenting Plans

Joan Wright & Associates

What is Mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary negotiation process through which a separating couple works with an impartial third party to find mutually beneficial solutions to the issues affecting their children such as living arrangements, visitation and child support.

The goal of mediation is for the parties to reach an agreement that both think is fair and in the best interests of their family.

Why Mediate?

Better Outcomes for Children

- Research shows that when families reduce conflict and the parents reach an agreement suitable for both, the outcome is more beneficial for their children. Mediation helps improve communication between parties and thereby improves their future relationship.

Reduced Stress

- Separation and divorce is very stressful. In mediation the parties retain control over the process and have all their needs taken into consideration. The process also reduces stress on children because they see that their parents are working together for their benefit, even if they no longer live together.

Save Time

- As opposed to a prolonged court battle, mediation can typically resolve key issues within a few weeks.

Save Money

- Not only does mediation reduce the emotional costs of family disputes, but it also helps ease the financial consequences of separation. The cost is significantly less than negotiating with the assistance of lawyers, or going to court.

Protect Privacy

- Mediation allows you to settle your issues in a private, comfortable setting. It is informal, non-adversarial and, in order to promote candor, totally confidential.

Flexibility

- The mediation process allows you to customize a settlement based on your individual needs. In mediation, there is room for “thinking outside the box” to achieve the important goals of each party.
- If parents participate in forming an agreement they are more likely to follow the agreement and get along better in the future. A mediated agreement will normally include a provision for mediation of disputes that arise in the future, including implementation and modification of the original agreement.

What to Expect

When you contact our office to request mediation services, you will be sent an information sheet and a client questionnaire. Once you return the questionnaire the mediator will contact you to arrange an individual meeting where she will take time to ensure she understands what your goals for mediation are. After the individual meetings have taken place, joint sessions will be scheduled. The joint mediation sessions are normally about 2 hours in length. Typically, most separating couples can create a parenting plan in 10 hours or less.

Once an agreement has been reached a Memorandum of Understanding will be drafted. This Memorandum confirms what has been agreed upon. It becomes the basis for a separation agreement or court order. The Memorandum is NOT a legally binding agreement and it is strongly recommended that each party take this agreement to a lawyer for review and to obtain independent legal advice.

In some cases, it is possible to conduct the mediation sessions over the phone, making it possible for parties to participate from a distance.

The Mediator

Tracy Houlding is a counsellor and mediator who works with individuals and couples. She has received training in mediation, including mediating child support and the impact of domestic violence on separating couples. In a previous career she practiced law at the Office of the Children's Lawyer (Ontario) where she represented children in high conflict custody and access disputes.