



## Parent and Caregiver Frequently Asked Questions

### RNW's Family Mediation Program

#### Overview

Resolutions Northwest's Family Mediation Program works with families to move through difficult conversations and address conflict in meaningful and productive ways. We ensure that each family member's voice is heard and understood; we also create a space for family members to listen and honor others' perspectives.

We believe that personal empowerment leads to improved relationships. We believe that YOU know the solutions. Our job is to use the mediation process as a tool to create safety and creatively brainstorm new solutions.

The types of cases we work with include:

- Youth and Family Issues and Conflict
- Elder Care Issues and Conflict
- Adult Sibling Issues and Conflict
- Couples Issues and Conflicts

Our program uses trained family mediators who are coached and mentored by our staff of professional mediators. For family mediations where one of the parties is a youth, RNW uses a mediation team made up of one adult mediator and one trained youth mediator. The mediators meet with both parties in the conflict and help the parties find their own solution. Over 94% of community members who have used our services report satisfaction with the mediation process and the agreements reached during mediation.

#### How our mediation program works

1. The first step is to contact our office. Any member of the family can call our main office number 503-595-4890. Our front office staff will conduct a brief intake over the telephone, and can answer questions about the service. Next, you will receive a call from one of our staff case developers who will talk with you in greater depth about the issues you would like to discuss at the mediation and who will answer any additional questions you may have. The case developer will make a plan with you about how to contact the other people you wish to participate with in mediation. Then, we will schedule a session date and time with you.
2. If you decide you would like to move forward with mediation, we will contact the other parties, listen to their concerns and invite them to mediation. If all parties agree to move forward with a face-to-face mediation, we will schedule a session date, place and time with you.
3. If everyone agrees, all involved persons come to an hour session meeting with the co-mediators. The mediators will then explain the process, answer questions and begin the mediation. The number of sessions required for family mediations will be determined by the complexity of the issues to be resolved.

Finally, it is important to remember that mediation is a voluntary process and that the mediators are impartial in the process. Mediators do not "represent" either side" and mediators do not act as a judge deciding on evidence. Mediators simply help the parties discuss the issues together and most often help the parties create an agreement that works for both sides.

**"Resolutions Northwest  
is great! They helped  
me express myself"**

-Youth Mediation Participant

## What is Mediation?

**Mediation is an opportunity** for two people or groups in dispute to come together, talk, and reach their own solution to an argument or conflict. It is a chance to sit down in a quiet place with a trained, impartial mediator and talk about what is happening. The mediators do not decide who is right or wrong - their job is to facilitate a productive conversation that allows the parties to create mutually agreeable solutions. Through mediation, parents, caregivers, siblings and youth can:

- Open the doors to communication
- Create a positive environment to make change
- Build trust and understanding through listening
- Turn conflict into cooperation by working together on a resolution.

## What kinds of conflicts and issues can we bring to youth and family mediation?

- House rules, Household chores, or Responsibilities
- Curfew, Truancy, Runaway
- Sibling rivalry
- Unacceptable behavior
- Grades
- Issues around divorce
- Issues around step-parents
- Relationship/friendship issues
- Smoking/drinking/drugs
- Use of car
- Involvement with the Juvenile Department

## What kinds of conflict and issues can we bring to elder care mediation?

- Use of car
- Health care
- Living situation
- Finances

## What kinds of conflict and issues can we bring to adult sibling mediation?

- Responsibilities around parental care

## What kinds of conflict and issues can we bring to couples mediation?

- Division of property in partnership split
- Parenting plans

## How much does it cost?

This service is offered on a sliding scale with the session fee based on a family's gross income however, no family will be turned away for an inability to pay. In addition to fees, our program is funded in part by the Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution and we also rely on donations for a portion of the program's expenses.

Our family mediation services include a \$10 for an intake. In addition, the sliding scale fee for each mediation session is based on a family's gross income, as noted below.

<u>Gross Income</u>	<u>Per Session/Per Household**</u>
\$0 to \$2000/month	\$20
\$2001-\$3000	\$50
\$3001-\$4000	\$75
\$4001-\$5000	\$100
\$5000 and up	\$125

\*\*Per party if there are parties from more than one household

For all mediation services clients will be responsible for a \$25 rescheduling fee if they fail to show up without 24 hours advance cancellation notice.

## Why do people choose mediation at Resolutions Northwest?

Mediation is one method of resolving disputes. Some people choose mediation because they find it less expensive than litigation. Others wish to resolve issues in a more amicable, non-adversarial way. Mediation can help the parties decrease the conflict between them and work cooperatively to meet individual and collective needs. Additionally, the advantages of mediation are that

- Mediation is free or low cost
- Mediation is confidential
- Mediation gives individuals control over their own decisions
- Mediation solves problems...not symptoms
- Mediation saves time and money
- Mediation keeps you out of court
- Mediation helps individuals develop lasting agreements
- Mediation improves neighborhood livability
- Mediation improves relationships
- Mediation improves quality of life
- Mediation reduces stress
- Mediation is successful

## How successful is mediation?

- Mediation satisfies participants. In 2007, well over 90% of our clients reported satisfaction with the mediation process.
- Mediation is ten times less expensive than court. In 2007, our costs were \$440 per case. Resolving comparable cases in the justice system starts at \$3,000 per case paid directly by the parties or paid for by tax dollars.
- Mediation is four times more effective in reducing crime than court. When mediation is used to resolve cases, offenders are up to *4 times less likely* to commit a crime in the following year (*Portland State University Criminal Justice Department Study, 2001*).

## Who are the mediators?

For our youth and family mediations, RNW uses a mediation team made up of one adult mediator and one youth mediator. These two trained mediators of different age groups help bridge generation gaps and open doors of communication and build trust. For our family mediations, RNW uses a team of trained adult mediators.

## What are the mediators' qualifications?

RNW mediators have met the requirements to be Community Mediators under the Oregon Administrative Rules for Community Dispute Resolution Centers. In addition, they have completed an advanced training in Youth and Family Mediation.

## Is mediation confidential?

The confidentiality of our mediations services are protected by state law. There are certain limitations to the protection of confidentiality. Your case developers will review the protections and limitations of confidentiality in your initial conversation.

## How many sessions will we need?

The number of sessions that clients need varies, depending on the number and complexity of the issues the parties wish to resolve.

## Do I need an attorney?

Mediation is not a substitute for legal advice or legal representation. RNW encourages all mediation clients to seek the advice of an attorney regarding their individual situation and needs.

**What about domestic violence?**

RNW is committed to client safety. Mediation is helpful for many parties, but is not helpful or appropriate in all circumstances. RNW assesses for domestic violence in family mediation cases. Staff conducts an initial and ongoing evaluation to determine the presence and degree of domestic violence between the parties and the steps necessary to protect the safety of the participants, up to and including terminating the mediation. Clients are encouraged to share any concerns they have about their own or another person's safety with RNW staff.

**What if there is a restraining order between us?**

If there is a current restraining order between the parties, or if there has been a restraining order between the parties at any time within the last calendar year, RNW will schedule an assessment meeting with each party. During this meeting, RNW will work with each person to determine whether mediation is appropriate in their case, and, if so, what additional arrangements are necessary to ensure client safety during the mediation process.

**Can I bring another person to the appointment?**

Third parties, such as new significant others, relatives, or friends, are only allowed to take part in a session if both parties to the mediation agree to have that third party present.

**Are services offered in languages other than English?**

Family Mediation services are provided in English and Spanish by bi-lingual staff and volunteers. We also offer our services with interpreters for all other languages in partnership with other community-based organizations who have additional language capacities.