



Neighborhood Mediation Program Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

Resolutions Northwest's Neighborhood Mediation Program provides neighbors and families in Portland with a confidential and compassionate process for resolving conflicts in a positive and personal way. Community mediation grew out of the social and political movements of the 1960s to empower community members to resolve their own disputes, rather than take it to the slow and expensive court system.

"The mediators helped to open the dialogue between me and my neighbor. I was very frustrated going into the meeting, however, now I feel my issues were heard and understood. Thank you."

There is not cost for Portland residents to use this mediation service. Our program is funded primarily through a grant with the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Involvement but we also rely on donations for a portion of the program's expenses. Our program uses trained community volunteer mediators who are coached and mentored by our staff of professional mediators. 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.

Many common neighborhood disputes RNW's volunteer mediators have successfully helped Portland residents resolve are:

- **Neighborhood/Community:** noise, pets, property maintenance, nuisances, boundary disputes
- **Interpersonal:** harassment, threats, minor assaults
- **Landlord/Tenant:** repairs, damages, public safety, evictions
- **Consumer/Merchant:** refusal to honor sale price or warranty

How our mediation program works

1. The first step is to contact our office. Our front office staff will take a brief description of your problem, explain the mediation process, and determine a suitable time for a mediator to call you back. If your concern is not appropriate for mediation, we will refer you to other resources. You can contact us by, phone at 503-595-4890; email at: info@resolutionsnorthwest.org; or you can drop by our offices at: 1827 NE 44th Ave, Suite 300, Portland during normal business hours Monday-Friday.
2. Following your initial call, you will receive a call from one of our volunteer mediators who will listen to your concerns, clarify information discuss who is involved, and help identify the issues you would like to discuss with the other party.

The mediator will assist you in two ways:

- The mediator can help you prepare for a successful discussion with the other party about your concern. You may find that with helpful information, support, and encouragement you can resolve the issue yourself, or
 - If you decide you would like to move forward with mediation, the mediator will contact the other party, listen to their concerns and invite them to mediation. If both 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 a 2 hour session meeting with the co-mediators. The mediators will then explain the process, answer questions and begin the mediation. In over 90% of cases, the mediation session results in a written agreement for both neighbors to take home.

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.

Community 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.

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.

Mediation: the Basics

- Mediation is effective: 94% of RNW clients report satisfaction with their mediated agreements.
- Mediation is voluntary: Mediation is an opportunity for parties in conflict to come together voluntarily to work out an agreement
- Mediation is confidential: The confidentiality of our mediations services are protected by state law.
- Mediations are conducted by a neutral third party: The mediators have no stake in the outcome. Their job is to facilitate a fair and impartial process.

"I called Resolutions Northwest yesterday to tell them the issue with my neighbor has been resolved. A huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and part of that was knowing that if all my best efforts had failed, RNW would have been there to help. I have been very impressed with everyone's concern and promptness in getting back to me. If I or anyone in my neighborhood has another issue that cannot be resolved on our own, I will definitely call RNW again. It seems like a wonderful organization. Thank you so much!"

Mediation is NOT:

- A court hearing: Rather than hearing witnesses and evidence, mediators will ask the parties to share their position and interests.
- A process to determine right and wrong: The parties, rather than a judge or jury, have the power to make agreements based on their individual needs and interests.
- A counseling session: The mediators are there to help people resolve issues. Mediators do not give advice.

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?

RNW neighborhood volunteer mediators are committed community members interested in given back to the community by working with Portlanders to resolve disputes.

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 to their 35-hour basic mediation training, they undertake a 100 hour mentorship program with RNW staff to continue to develop, hone and practice the skill and art of 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.

What if there is a no contact order between the two parties?

If there is a current no contact order between the parties, or if there has been a no contact order between the parties at any time within the last calendar year, RNW will schedule a completely separate initial appointment with each party. During the initial individual appointments, RNW will work with each person to determine whether mediation is appropriate in their case, and, if so, what additional arrangements are necessary for 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.