

Why should you take the time to prepare for mediation?

To settle a case involving divorce, child custody, child placement, or parenting time, you will need to participate in making a series of decisions. Those decisions may affect future finances, parenting time, care of your children, or support of your children. By taking the time to think through the issues and gather important papers, you can help the process move along more quickly.

If you have a lawyer, she or he can help you decide what issues you need to think about, and what documents you should be bringing to mediation. Lawyers are encouraged to meet with clients to prepare them before mediation begins, to be available by telephone, as well as to be available after the mediation to discuss any settlement. Your lawyer may send your assigned mediator important documents and a short note summarizing your position before your session takes place.

Please use this brochure to learn about issues you should consider and documents you should assemble to prepare for your session. If you have any questions before your mediation, please call the Family Court Mediation Unit at (401) 458-5032.

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Rhode Island Family Court Mediation Program



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How should I prepare for my Mediation Session?

If your mediation involves **CUSTODY OR PLACEMENT**

If your case is about establishing the placement of your child, a mediation session will focus on where your child will live.

Are you seeking joint custody? Parents with joint custody share the responsibility of making decisions about the health, education, and care of their children. Your mediation may include discussions about:

Health and Medical Issues

- Selection of doctors, dentists, and therapists
- Treatment decisions
- Medication
- Emergency medical care
- Access to information and records
- Medical Insurance – whose?
- Sharing of extra expenses

Education/Child Care

- School/child care enrollment
- Meetings with teachers
- School contact for emergencies
- Access to information and records
- Extracurricular activities

Spiritual

- Religious upbringing and practices

Child Support

- How each parent will contribute financially to raise your child
- Previous Child Support Orders

If your mediation involves **PARENTING TIME WITH YOUR CHILD**

In most cases, children benefit from regular contact and parenting time with both parents. You should come to your mediation session prepared to discuss how you and your child's other parent will spend time with your child.

Some of the issues you will be discussing during mediation may include the following:

Regular Schedule with Child

- Days and times with each parent
- Weekends
- Times of pick-up and/or drop-off
- Transporting child to each home
- Special needs of the child
- Telephone contact

Holidays and School Vacations

- Holidays and special days you would like to share with your child
- School vacations

Canceling Parenting Time

- How to handle postponements or cancellations

Travel with Your Child

- Permission needed from other parent for overnight travel out of state

In certain cases, the following information can be helpful:

- DCYF information
- Counselor reports
- Police reports

If your mediation involves **DIVORCE**

If you have children, you will need to consider many of the issues highlighted on page 1 and page 2 of this pamphlet.

Your mediation also will involve a series of important financial decisions. While every couple's financial situation is different, in many cases the following information or documents are useful:

- Recent pay stubs or proof of income
- Business income, assets, liabilities
- Any trust or estate plans for each party, and for children
- Previous settlement offers
- Listing of current monthly bills and expenses
- Expected future monthly budget
- Mortgage balance and appraisals of home/other property
- Tax returns (last 2 years)
- Bank statements
- Value of investments (stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, etc.)
- List of loans & credit card balances
- List of all financial accounts in your names
- Descriptions and values of cars
- Personal property to be divided - list
- Retirement account/pension values
- Health insurance policy information
- Life insurance policy information
- Pre-nuptial agreement