

HAVE A CONFLICT?

Can't seem to work it out? Considering going to court or calling the police to file a complaint? An alternative is now available: You can choose to settle the matter quickly through **The Dispute Resolution Center**.

Through mediation, the Center provides a fast and fair means of helping people work out lasting solutions to their conflicts by helping them resolve disputes on their own.

WHAT IS MEDIATION?

Mediation is a process in which people in a dispute meet voluntarily with a trained, impartial person – the mediator – and attempt to reach a solution to their problem.

WHO CAN BE HELPED BY MEDIATION?

Typical disputes include:

- Family disputes
- Divorce / custody / visitation
- Neighborhood conflicts
- Consumer complaints
- Property disputes / damage
- Financial disputes
- Employer-employee conflicts

WHY CHOOSE MEDIATION?

Affordable: Mediation is available at a minimal cost to participants. An administrative fee is charged, based on the nature of the case and whether or not litigation has been filed; it is a one-time fee, not hourly.

Timely: Most cases are heard within a month from the time the dispute is brought to the Dispute Resolution Center. Mediations are scheduled during the business day, Monday through Friday.

Private: Mediation is a private and confidential process, truly a safe harbor in which the parties can air their differences and attempt to settle the case. There is no recording made of the mediation. If the mediation involves a case in litigation, the court is notified only that the case settled or did not settle. If the case does not involve litigation, there is no record of the mediation outside the Center. All notes taken during mediation are destroyed at the end of the session to protect the confidentiality of the process.

Informal: Mediators are trained to set people at ease so they can focus on the problem and how to resolve it. Each participant is given an opportunity to give a brief description of the dispute. Although the past may be what brings the participants to the Dispute Resolution Center, mediation is focused on the future. Mediators do not decide who is right or who is wrong; their role is to help clients find middle ground.

Voluntary: Both parties must agree to allow the Dispute Resolution Center mediate their dispute. If the mediation does not result in a written settlement, it's like the day never happened, and any other formal legal action can still be taken by the parties. The mediators do not represent any party in mediation; they remain neutral throughout the process.

Effective: About 75 percent of the all mediations result in settlements. However, no one is EVER forced to reach an agreement. If the parties reach an agreement, that agreement is reduced to writing and the parties sign it. The signed mediated settlement agreement is just as legal as any other signed document in Texas.

WHAT HAPPENS IN MEDIATION?

When you contact the Dispute Resolution Center, you will be interviewed and asked to give us some basic information about yourself, the dispute, and the person or business involved.

If the dispute is appropriate for mediation, we will notify the other party that a complaint has been made. A mediation date will be set at a time convenient for both parties.

All sides to a dispute will be present at the mediation session. In this neutral setting, mediators give each side the opportunity to describe the disagreement, without interruption. Then, the mediators guide the discussion and help the parties arrive at their own solution.

When everyone is satisfied, the mediators help write an agreement. A signed copy of the agreement is then given to each party.

WHO WILL MEDIATE?

Mediators are certified volunteers who are trained by the Dispute Resolution Center to conduct mediation and write agreements. Mediators represent a wide variety of fields within the community, from business and education to retired individuals and homemakers.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Call 372-3381, or come by **The Dispute Resolution Center** at 415 West Eight Avenue.

Be prepared to give a brief summary of your dispute including the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all parties.



The Dispute Resolution Center
a program of The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
P.O. Box 9257
Amarillo, Texas 79105-9257

The Dispute Resolution Center

DISPUTE RESOLUTION... AN ALTERNATE APPROACH

