

Northwest Conflict Management Center
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By Norma Myers

What is mediation?

Mediation is a problem solving process that focuses on the future. It is a process designed to assist individuals experiencing conflict with creating a mutually satisfactory resolution of their differences. It is also effective in improving communications and building relationships. Mediation differs from litigation in that it is not designed to determine who is right or wrong. In mediation, the parties work to create their own agreement with the assistance of the mediator. Unlike litigation, where a judge imposes a decision, nothing is decided in a mediation unless all parties agree to the terms. Mediation is a confidential process to the extent allowable by law.

What is a Mediator?

A mediator is an unbiased, neutral third party who assists parties in resolving their conflict. A mediator is someone who is trained in resolving disputes and has no direct authority to impose a decision on the parties in conflict.

What is the process?

Mediation is a multi-stage process designed to meet the needs of the participants. It begins with introductions and mediator's opening statement that explains the mediation process. Following the introductions, each participant is given the opportunity to state the issues in his/her remarks first. After the initial statements are presented, the mediator may "caucus" with each party separately. It is in the caucus that the parties may express other interests, needs and issues confidentially to the mediator. The parties may then meet jointly, or they may have a second caucus. The parties may then begin to develop options or steps they may each take to resolve the issues. If the parties reach a mutually acceptable resolution, the agreement is generally reduced to writing and each party signs. The agreement is then binding upon the parties. Should the mediation not result in an agreement, the mediator reviews progress made and advises parties of options available through other processes.

Why should I mediate?

- Mediation offers parties an opportunity to communicate directly in a non-threatening forum.
- Mediation offers a private place available to discuss issues.
- Emotional involvement in a conflict can cloud one's ability to think creatively and objectively; mediation can help parties move beyond the barriers created by these emotions.
- Mediation can be healing; it offers an opportunity for participants to face each other and tell each other how the conflict has affected them personally.
- Mediation is brief, cost effective, and efficient. Formal processes are lengthy, expensive and often have adverse effects on the relationship.

- **We are successful in helping settle over 95% of landlord/tenant disputes that are referred to us.**

Fees:

FREE: There are state funds for people earning below \$15,000 annually. Only one party in such a mediation must reside in Spokane County.

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|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| \$15,000 - \$20,000 per annum | \$15/hr per party |
| \$20,000 - \$30,000 per annum | \$20/hr per party |
| \$30,000 - \$40,000 per annum | \$30/hr per party |
| \$40,000 - \$50,000 per annum | \$40/hr per party |
| \$50,000 - \$60,000 per annum | \$65/hr per party |
| \$60,000 - \$70,000 per annum | \$80/hr per party |
| above \$70,000 | \$100/hr per party |