

FAMILY MEDIATION PROGRAM



Superior Court
of
New Jersey

Essex Vicinage

Newark, NJ

WHAT IS THE FAMILY MEDIATION PROGRAM?

The Essex Vicinage Family Mediation Program is an alternative program that assists families in making legal custody and time sharing arrangements for their children. Instead of a hearing in which the matter is decided by a judge, families work with the mediator to make decisions and resolve the issues themselves. This service is free of charge.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

People meet with a mediator who assists them in developing their own legally binding agreement. Length and number of sessions vary. All sessions are confidential except when allegations of child abuse or neglect are made. The mediator makes no report to the court.

If the parties are unable to agree, the case is referred to court. The parties are then scheduled to appear before a judge who decides the matter.

Children are usually not included in the mediation sessions although exceptions can be made for older children or if circumstances warrant.

WHO PARTICIPATES?

Any of the following may participate:

- parents
- present & future caregivers
- grandparents- siblings
- DYFS (if involved)
- attorneys as consultants (not required)

WHAT CASES ARE ACCEPTED?

Cases in which families have the following:

- a willingness to negotiate
- a desire to settle matters amicably
- the ability to work in the best interest of the child
- a desire to make their own decisions regarding custody or parenting time
- a desire to keep family matters confidential

WHAT CASES ARE NOT ACCEPTED?

Cases involving any of the following:

- domestic violence
- child abuse or neglect
- imminent danger of removal from state
- Best Interest Investigation in progress
- parents who are minors

WHAT IS THE MEDIATOR'S ROLE?

The mediator acts as an objective third party who guides the process, facilitates communication, suggests creative solutions and looks for common interests. The mediator organizes and controls the session and helps the parties plan the future.

Whenever necessary, the mediator informs the parties about the legal process and provides information about child development and parenting. The mediator prepares the agreement when one is reached.

WHAT OTHER SERVICES ARE OFFERED?

Referrals and consultations on:

- private mediation
- divorce
- parenting plans
- mental health services
- legal services
- substance abuse
- AIDS support services

BENEFITS OF MEDIATION

Mediation provides a safe, comfortable setting in which families can make the often difficult decisions regarding custody and parenting time.

Families control the decisions affecting them while keeping their personal matters confidential. Children benefit from the reduced conflict and increased cooperation.

Mediation promotes communication and helps families learn techniques for resolving future differences.



Individuals with disabilities who require special assistance are encouraged to notify the Family Mediation Program before coming to the Courthouse Complex.

LOCATIONS

The Family Mediation Program has two locations at the Superior Court Complex. For information call:

Samuel G. Forlenza, MA
Program Coordinator
Old Court House, Room 201B
470 Dr. M. L. King Blvd.
Newark, NJ 07102
201/621-2647

Dawn Marcus Stept, Esquire
Family Mediator
Old Court House, Room 208
470 Dr. M. L. King Blvd.
Newark, NJ 07102.
201/621-5059

Susan M. Rogers, LCSW
Family Mediator
Essex County Courts Bldg.
Room 107 201/621-6439

David L. Yennior, MA
Family Mediator
Essex County Courts Bldg.
Room 121 201/621-4224

Secretary: Evalina Mathis
201/621-5060, 2530