



Fact Sheet

Supporting Ontario families through mediation services

Mediation is an alternative to litigation that can result in an earlier resolution of a family legal matter.

An early resolution of a case reduces the amount of time spent in court, can minimize the conflict between parties, and may result in less stress for any children involved.

Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) offers mediation services for low-income clients with family law matters such as child support, custody and access. A mediator is a trained, neutral professional who works with both parties to reach a settlement. Both parties agree to work with a mediator to resolve disputes outside of the courtroom. In this type of mediation, sessions can last from two to three hours.

Eligibility for mediation

Someone with a low income or no income, who has a family law matter, may qualify for free mediation services. Clients will be asked questions about their financial and legal situation to find out if they qualify.

If there is a history of abuse in the relationship, the parties may not be able to work together with a mediator toward a resolution. All applicants are carefully screened by LAO staff in order to assess the appropriateness of mediation for their matter.

What to expect in mediation

Mediation sessions last about two to three hours, and are scheduled by appointment. Before the mediation session starts, both parties are asked to sign a Mediation Agreement, which lists the rules of the mediation.

During the session, both parties are asked to discuss their dispute, provide documents that support their cases, and work with the mediator and the other party to find an appropriate resolution. At the end of the session, the mediator will provide a report on the outcome of the mediation.

Questions?

For more information on this topic contact media@lao.on.ca