

# Citizens Advice Bureau: Family Mediation Service

When people separate, they often need to decide how they'll have contact with their children or divide property after they part ways. Sometimes, those decisions can turn into disputes. The Family Court prefers former partners to sort things out between themselves, and some people do that. But if that doesn't work, mediation can help. Citizens Advice Bureau's Family and Child Mediation Service is run by professionally-qualified family mediators with plenty of experience in guiding both parties to an agreement.

## **What is mediation?**

Mediation is an alternative way of resolving disputes where two parties sit down together and, guided by mediators, negotiate a practical and fair solution to their problem. It gives everyone the opportunity to tell their side of the story, define issues, consider options, and settle on a solution that suits them both. Mediation is guided by two experienced and professionally-qualified mediators. They're impartial and don't give any advice or make any decisions for you; they're only there to help you focus on the best way forward.

If mediation is successful, the result is a mutual agreement that the parties write in their own words. This isn't legally binding, but it can be used as a basis for court applications.

## **How does mediation help settle property disputes?**

Our family mediators have many years of experience in mediating disputes over property and finances. It's a good idea to get legal advice before trying to reach a property settlement – that way, you'll go into a mediation aware of your options and your legal rights and responsibilities so you can make informed decisions.

## **How does mediation help settle parenting disputes?**

Separation may end a relationship between partners, but your relationship with your children continues – just in a different form. Our family mediators place a lot of emphasis on helping parents to reach an agreement that's in the best interests of their children. They'll also explain "equal shared parental responsibility", the Family Law Act's idea that both parents have an equal role in making decisions about the important issues that affect their children like their education, healthcare, and emotional well-being. At your pre-mediation interview we'll discuss how equal shared parental responsibility can work in your case, and help you formulate the best possible parenting plan that's unique to you as parents.

## **How does mediation proceed?**

Once you and the other party have agreed to mediation, we'll book a separate pre-mediation interview for each of you. This is an opportunity for you to tell your side of the story without the other party there. It's also a good time to ask any questions or raise any issues you're unsure about. The mediator will explain how mediation works so you're fully prepared. If care arrangements for your children need to be worked out, you'll be given a parenting plan checklist to help you address the important decisions you have to make about that.

After your pre-mediation interview, we'll book the mediation itself. Both parties have to attend this together and in the presence of our mediators. Citizens Advice Bureau uses a co-mediation model with two mediators to make sure the process is balanced and unbiased.

## **How much does family mediation cost?**

Pre-mediation interview	\$50 per party
Children's matters	\$150 per party
Property settlement	\$350 per party
Children's matters and property settlement	\$450 per party

## **Need more information?**

Find out more information about mediation at our Perth office.

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