

How to Mediate Conflicts

ToolTip #15
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Whenever leaders talk about managing meetings where arguments may start, the question always comes up about how to best resolve conflicts. Although each conflict is unique, common approaches to conflict resolution do exist. One approach uses mediation. Although a trained mediator best handles this, it may be helpful for neighborhood leaders to be aware of the process. The following is an outline of a sample mediation session.



Step 1. Introduction: The mediator's first job is to make the parties feel at ease and explain the ground rules. The mediator's role is not to make a decision but to help the parties reach an agreement. The mediator explains that he or she will not take sides.

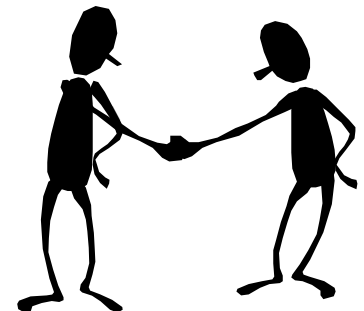
Step 2. Telling the Story: Each party tells what happened. One person tells his or her side of the story first. No interruptions are allowed. The other party then explains his or her version of the facts. Again, no interruptions are allowed. Any of the participants, including the mediator, may take notes during the process. The mediator's notes are thrown away at the end of the session to ensure confidentiality.

Step 3: Identifying Facts, Issues, and Interests: The mediator next attempts to identify any agreed-upon facts and issues and the issues that are important to each person. The mediator listens to each side, summarizes each party's view, and checks to make sure each party understands the other's view.

Step 4: Identifying Alternative Solutions: During this step, the participants (with help from the mediator) think of all possible solutions to their problem. Because the opposing sides to the dispute probably arrived at the mediation session with a desired outcome in mind, it is often difficult for them to consider other solutions. The mediator makes a list of solutions and asks each party to explain his or her feelings about each one.

Step 5: Revising and Discussing Solutions: On the basis of feelings expressed by each party, the mediator revises the list of possible solutions and tries to identify a solution that both parties may be able to agree on.

Step 6: Reaching an Agreement: The mediator helps the parties to reach an agreement by choosing a solution that has been discussed and that both parties agree on. After the parties have decided on a solution, an agreement should be put in writing. The written agreement should be as specific as possible, stating exactly what each party has agreed to do and when he or she will do it. The agreement should also explain what will happen if either disputant breaks the agreement. Once it is finalized, the agreement is usually signed by both parties.



MEDIATION RESOURCES

(Conflict Management Classes at Cabrillo.....)

Other Resources:

American Arbitration Association

(212) 484-4000

Internet: www.adr.org

American Bar Association

(202) 662-1000

Internet: www.abanet.org

National Association for Community Mediation

(202) 667-9700

Internet: www.nafcn.org

National Center for Conflict Resolution Education

(800) 308-9419

Internet: www.nccre.org

Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution

(202) 667-9700

Internet: www.spidr.org