

Good Shepherd Mediation Program
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INTAKE PHONE

215-843-5413

ORGANIZATION MISSION

The mission of the mediation program is to encourage peace, reconciliation and social justice through the use of mediation and other constructive conflict resolution processes. Mediation empowers disputants to search creatively for meaningful and lasting solutions to their conflicts without resorting to crime or violence.

CLIENT ELIGIBILITY

There are no restrictions on client eligibility for mediation services.

INTAKE PROCESS

By phone: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Callers speak with the mediation case manager who explains the mediation process, asks questions regarding the nature of the dispute, and if mediation is requested contacts the responding party, schedules the mediation and selects the mediator. Disputants usually can schedule sessions within a few weeks. Sessions are held at the Mediation Center in Germantown, and at various community organizations around the city that have agreed to share their space for mediations.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Mediation is used successfully to resolve interpersonal disputes involving families (parent-youth, divorce and child custody), friends, neighbors, employers and employees, consumers and merchants, landlords and tenants, and others. Staff and volunteer mediators also mediate for the Pennsylvania Department of Education Office of Dispute Resolution (special education), the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Postal Service REDRESS (employment discrimination cases).

PROGRAMS

Community Mediation. Mediation is a process for resolving disputes with the help of a trained, objective third party called a mediator. The mediator does not offer advice nor make decisions for the parties. The mediator facilitates the communication session, encourages peacemaking and writes the agreement if one is reached. Mediation is voluntary, informal, confidential and inexpensive. Eighty-five percent of the disputes that reach mediation result in a written settlement between the parties.

Meeting Facilitation. GSMP provides facilitators for organizational, informational, decision-making, problem-solving, planning and dispute resolution meetings. Meeting facilitators are trained third-party neutrals who provide process leadership and process expertise to help groups accomplish their meeting goals harmoniously. GSMP facilitators are experienced mediators who have taken advanced training in multi-party mediation, town meeting facilitation, study circles, maori circles, and/or conferencing methods.

Family Passages Initiative offers a comprehensive package of family mediation services, including screening and orientation, facilitated mediation of divorce and child custody matters, preparation of written memoranda of understanding, access to external legal review of the mediated settlements, and appropriate referrals for additional services and community-based supports for adults and children.

Training and consulting. GSMP offers a variety of conflict resolution and mediation training and consulting services. For course descriptions and fees, visit the Web site.

Pre-hearing Conference Facilitation at Dependency Court. GSMP provides mediators to facilitate pre-hearing conferences for the Philadelphia Family Court Dependency Unit. The parties involved in all new petitions alleging abuse and neglect attend a pre-hearing conference immediately prior to going into court for the adjudicatory hearing. The facilitated conference is

focused on the family's needs and strengths and aims to connect the family with available community resources. The mediators engage the participants in a collaborative process to discuss options and make recommendations to the judge, so that the court can take the parties' wishes into consideration when rendering orders. Pre-hearing conference participants are the parents or guardians, extended family members, the children (where appropriate), the Department of Human Services social worker, the attorneys, the social service providers, and others involved with the family.

Victim-Offender Conferencing (VOC). This restorative justice project offers juvenile offenders, and those they have harmed, an opportunity to meet face-to-face in a structured, secure environment to facilitate restoration, healing, and reconciliation, and/or to negotiate restitution. If the victim declines the invitation to conference with the offender, the offender and his/her family participate in family mediation, where the discussion centers on the consequences of the youth's actions to the youth, the victim, the family and the community. VOC offers first-time offenders between the ages of 10 and 21 an opportunity to take responsibility and be held accountable for their actions within a framework that balances the needs and responsibilities of victims, offenders and communities.

Restorative Justice Programs for Juveniles. In conjunction with the Office of the District Attorney, GSMP offers several programs that provide first-time juvenile offenders an opportunity to have their arrest records expunged by participating in conflict resolution, anger management and retail theft diversion and/or impact of auto theft workshops and completing several hours of community service.

School-based training. GSMP provides peer mediation and conflict resolution workshops in schools. Students learn effective communication and participatory decision-making skills that they can apply in their peer, family and community relationships. Students learn to address the real

interests of each party. This approach to resolving school-related disputes offers students an opportunity to address their concerns constructively as an alternative to fighting. Schools hire GSMP on an ad hoc basis to do peer mediation training and implementation

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cheryl Cutrona, Esq.