



THE FAMILY CONSULTATION TEAM APPROACH TO PERMANENCY MEDIATION

MEDIATION BASICS

Basic principles of Mediation:

- **Voluntary** – You don't have to do it if you don't want to and you can stop when you want.
- **Informed Consent** – You should understand the mediation process, your legal rights and options.
- **Confidential** – What you say won't be shared unless you give permission and nothing said can be used at a future trial.
- **Impartial/Neutral** – The mediator doesn't take sides.
- **Self-Determination** – You get a voice in what is decided and won't be forced to agree to anything.

Special features of Permanency Mediation:

- **Child Centered** – The focus is on what is in your child's best interest, not the adults involved.
- **Parties work together and initial relationships begin to develop.**
- **The mediator comes to you and works around your schedule.**

The Family Consultation Team (FCT©) approach to Permanency Mediation is used for cases referred early in the court process while the goal is reunification. This approach recognizes that the best permanent plan for a child is to be reunited with his or her family if possible. A trained mediator will form a team that includes parents, extended family, social workers, attorneys and other service providers in a non-adversarial, supportive permanency planning process. The team will address what needs to occur for the child to return home, while at the same time considering another plan if reunification is not possible.

The FCT model lets you and your family have a voice in planning for the child. The FCT process focuses on the strengths of the child, the parents, the family and the community and how these strengths can be used to address issues of safety, support, continuity of relationships and permanency specific to the child's needs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PERMANENCY MEDIATION

Do I have to pay anything for Family Consultation Team services?

No. The court pays for Family Consultation Team services.

If I decide not to participate or decide to withdraw from FCT will it be held against me in court?

No. Parties referred to FCT are required to meet with the mediator to hear about FCT but after the initial educational session your decision to participate in FCT or withdraw from it at a later date is totally voluntary. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate or to withdraw after the process begins. In fact, the court is not informed which party withdrew.

How does the FCT process work?

The mediator will begin the FCT process by identifying the team members. The mediator will have individual sessions with these team members and may bring certain team members together for joint sessions. Before long the mediator will bring the whole team together for a team meeting. At this meeting the team will develop a plan with tasks for team members to accomplish in order for the child to return home. Meetings will also discuss an alternative plan in case the child is unable to return home. Additional team meetings will be scheduled to monitor progress on the plan.

How long will mediation take?

Typically, the FCT approach can take several months and happens as the court process continues. If the child is unable to be returned home, the alternate plan will be discussed in greater detail using another model of Permanency Mediation.

Will my social worker be told if I admit to having doubts about parenting my child?

No. Mediation is confidential between the mediator and you. The mediator will only share information you give permission to share. However, the mediator will report any new abuse or neglect that is disclosed.

What happens to the court case during the FCT process?

The case continues forward in the court even after a referral to mediation is made. In that way if mediation is not successful in reaching an agreement the case has not been stalled and will proceed on to the next court event.

What is my attorney's role in the mediation?

Your attorney's role is to represent your legal interests and advocate for you. Your attorney will be part of the Family Consultation Team and will be invited to all meetings. Your attorney should review with you any draft agreements that are written by the mediator to ensure that you understand the agreement.

Who are the mediators?

MFFK mediators are professionals specially trained to help people focus on what may be in the best interest of the child or children involved.

Your Mediator is:

He/she can be reached at:

For more information please call:
617-989-9425 (Roxbury Office)
978-640-0089 (Tewksbury Office)
508-791-3871 (Worcester Office)
413-586-2303 (Northampton Office)

Children's Services of Roxbury, Inc.
Massachusetts Families for Kids

PERMANENCY MEDIATION SERVICES



A Guide for Parties Referred to Permanency Mediation

Family Consultation Team Approach

When the Goal is Reunification