



ONLINE MEDIATION FACTSHEET

How does online mediation work?

Online family mediation is similar to face-to-face mediation. It uses many of the same approaches, guidelines and structures plus a few little extras to enable everyone to make progress in this virtual forum.

Preparing for your online mediation session:

- Your mediator will use a video conference platform such as Zoom or Skype to facilitate the online mediation session. You will receive an invitation to the online meeting which contains an individual link to your meeting together with the meeting ID reference.
- Your mediator will set up a trial test call to make sure that all hardware and software is working correctly.
- Participants will be asked to sign an Online Mediation Agreement before the session starts.

Communication tips:

- During online mediation, there may be a short time lag which can lead to people speaking over one another, thereby making it hard to politely interject. Have a pen and paper to hand so that you can make brief notes on issues that you wish to raise when it is your turn to speak. This is considered good practice in any mediation session: in online mediation, it becomes essential for reasons of courtesy and order.
- Begin each sentence using the name of the person you wish to address. Your mediator will also follow this technique in order to prevent confusion.
- It is often the case that when people are in front of a camera, they exaggerate their natural mannerisms. Wearing a headset can help participants to feel connected and present in mediation but this is certainly not a requirement.



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During the online mediation session:

- The mediator will remind everyone of the mediation guidelines as outlined in the Online Mediation Agreement.
- The mediator will check that only those named in the Agreement will be present in the rooms used by the participants for the duration of the online mediation session.
- The mediator will check that the mediation session will not be directly or indirectly recorded by the participants (or a third party acting on behalf of the participants).
- The mediator will discuss the protocol for refreshment and comfort breaks and establish a contingency plan.
- If a participant wishes to speak privately with the mediator, the mediator will need to 'hang up' on the relevant party in order to speak privately with the other. It is necessary to allow a brief pause to ensure that the party not privy to the caucus is fully disconnected. The mediator will then reconnect as appropriate.

What happens if technology goes wrong?

- Things can go wrong, connections can fail. Sometimes, the best course of action is to pause the mediation and restart the connection. This allows the connection to refresh and, in most cases, will resolve the problem. Trying to work through a poor connection can lead to frustration for one and all! The mediator will explain the reconnection procedure.
- If a connection cannot be re-established, the mediator will enact the contingency plan.