

# Custody Mediation is Good for Families



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**Office of Custody  
Mediation**

***Custody Mediation Matters***



## Frequently asked questions:

### Do I need to hire an attorney to file for custody/visitation at the Juvenile court?

It is your decision whether or not to hire an attorney to assist you. If you decide not to enlist the aid of an attorney you will need to go down to the Custody Intake Office at the Juvenile Court. However, you do not need an attorney to come to the Custody Intake Office and pick up the necessary paperwork.

**Where do I go?** Go to the Whitlach Building at 1910 Carnegie Avenue in Cleveland. Walk-in hours are from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

**What do I bring?** You do not need to bring any documents or money on your first visit. However, you will need to attach a copy of the child's birth certificate, social security information and proof of paternity, when filing the paperwork you get from the Custody Intake Office.

**Who can file for custody?** Juvenile Court assists un-married parents who need to establish custody, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles seeking custody of children not products of a marriage or divorce.

**There are exceptions to these rules please contact our office to see if you qualify.**



### What other information is needed?

Names, birth dates, and complete addresses for the parents and child. It is also helpful to supply information about the parent's current marital status.

### How do I get proof of paternity?

Paternity is established through the Child support Enforcement Agency, Probate Court or the Central Paternity Registry (1/1/1998). Documents from these agencies prove paternity.



### How much does it cost to do this?

It depends on several factors. That is why it is important to appear in person at the Custody Intake Office.

### What happens then?

Bring the completed paperwork back to the Custody Intake Office. It will be reviewed for correctness and completeness. The applicant takes it to the Clerk of Courts office to file. The case will be sent to the Office of Mediation or to the court to be set for a hearing.

**What is Mediation?** Mediation is a voluntary process in which the parties develop their own parenting plan with the help of the mediator. The mediator is a neutral third party who encourages parents to discuss the issues concerning their children and to help them reach an agreement. The parties control the outcome and they can communicate their feelings with each other directly, in a safe environment. This reduces hostility and helps foster a rational discussion. The outcome of the mediation is limited only by the nature of the problem and the ability of the parents to work together for their child's best interests.

**How will I know if my case goes to court or to mediation?** If your case is sent to and accepted by the Office of Mediation, you will receive a Notice of Mediation in the mail. The notice will contain the name and telephone number of your assigned mediator. **Please call the mediator, immediately.**

### What if I come to the mediation and the other party doesn't come? What if we both come, but can't agree? Will my case stop?

If you are the filing party, it is important that you appear at any scheduled mediations or court hearings. If you fail to appear, several things could happen: your case could be dismissed or there could be sanctions for contempt of court. However, if you both appear at mediation and cannot reach an agreement, your case will be forwarded to the court to be set for a hearing. You will hear something from the court, not the Office of Mediation.

### If we do agree, do we have to come back to court?

Usually the mediator can draw up your agreement and have it ready for your signature in a short time. You sign the agreement and other necessary documents. The Office of Mediation returns your case to the courtroom of the judge assigned to your case for final approval and signature. Then, your paperwork is sent to the Clerk of Courts. Once that process is completed, you can receive certified copies of your custody papers. You will hear from the court, not the Office of Mediation.

### What if we agreed, but something changes. What should we do?

If circumstances change and it affects your child, you may need to return to the Custody Intake Office at 1910 Carnegie Avenue to file a motion to modify. As before, you will need to provide photo copies of the child's birth certificate, social security information and proof of paternity. However, it costs considerably less to file a motion to modify than it does to file a new application.