



Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution process that involves a third-party neutral (the mediator) who helps parties reach an agreement. This process occurs instead of (or before) presenting evidence to a judge in a court trial and letting the judge decide the outcome of the case. Mediation can be less expensive and less time consuming, but any agreements that come out of mediation may be harder to change in the future.

Many state courts require parties involved in a child custody dispute to go through some form of alternative dispute resolution. If you have experienced domestic abuse in your relationship, consider the following effects of domestic abuse when deciding if mediation is right for you.

EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON....

- **Autonomy (Independence):** *How comfortable are you saying what you think, raising difficult topics, disagreeing with the other person, and standing up for what matters to you?*
- **Good faith/Fair dealing:** *How confident are you that both of you will: (1) follow the rules; (2) share important information; (3) hear each other out; (4) cooperate; (5) stand by promises and agreements; and (6) not undermine the process?*
- **Judgment:** *How well can you rely on the other person to make good decisions when it comes to the children, prioritize the children's needs, and share parental responsibility?*
- **Information:** *How well do you understand this process, your legal rights and options, technology, and the things you need to know to fully and effectively participate?*
- **Safety/Risk assessment:** *Is there anything about the process that makes you concerned for your safety or the safety of your child(ren)? Have any of the following occurred?*
 - Stalking
 - Sexual assault
 - Abuse during pregnancy
 - Threats to kill
 - Strangulation
 - Substance use/abuse
 - Controlling behaviors
 - Access to firearms
 - Increased frequency/severity
 - Child abuse
 - Animal abuse
 - Excessive jealousy

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