

A new and specialized family mediation, Elder Mediation addresses practical concerns and strengthens families' relationships.

Elder Mediation

FOR STRONGER FAMILY IDENTITY

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For many of us, there will come a time when an elderly member of our family will require significant assistance. Among other things, we may be called upon to:

- Arrange for the sale of the family home
- See to the financial and estate planning needs of an elderly parent/relative
- Devise a plan for the sharing of a cottage among adult children
- Arrange for caregiving

Having to make critical, life-altering decisions at what can be an intensely emotional and difficult time may lead to hostility among family members. Old resentments from childhood may resurface, disagreements about how to proceed may arise and new conflicts may develop.

Elder Mediation is a new and specialized area within family mediation, and it offers the potential both to address practical concerns and to strengthen the family's relationships. A professionally trained Elder Mediator creates an opportunity for family members to come together to articulate and discuss issues that have led to conflict for them, and sets the tone for preserving the family identity.

The mediator constructs a welcoming environment for a productive conversation in what is most frequently a multi-party, multi-issue setting. This conversation invites family members to explore possibilities for resolving conflict in a collaborative way.

Meeting to discuss a crucial family issue takes place in person. Out-of-town siblings may join in over the telephone or Skype. The creativity of the meeting style exemplifies a flexible and inclusive approach to encourage as many family members as possible to join in the conversation. Designed from the outset to be proactive, this process helps families.

The family assumes a key role in problem identification and resolution. For example, in the case of a diagnosis of dementia, a mediated action plan may alleviate the stresses and strains placed upon caregivers through the creation of a circle of care.

By committing to be part of the circle of care, family members volunteer to help by doing such things as cutting the grass, clearing snow, preparing meals or driving parents and relatives to appointments. The circle of care strengthens the bonds of kinship and contributes to the quality of life of the relative with dementia. This new quality of life touches the entire family. As a result of a mediated family conversation, family members enable the person with dementia to stay at home longer as a result of their loving support and assistance. Through the conscious choice of participating in a circle of care, the family bypasses placement of their loved one in a nursing home for a familiar, stable and loving environment – the family home. By sharing positive feelings about their proactive actions, they also strengthen the family's identity.

For families who choose to participate in Elder Mediation, the opportunity to reinforce the family's identity is considerable. Working with a certified Elder Mediator opens the door to a future-focused conversation for families. This focus on the future nurtures and supports the family identity by empowering the participants to revitalize already existing relationships and better prepare for the future.

When families need strong and practical measures to work through conflict and preserve relationships, Elder Mediation helps. Elder Mediation renews the family identity by addressing the family's present crisis while simultaneously focusing on effective collaboration. Elder Mediation is a viable new approach for safeguarding and strengthening family ties in times of crisis.

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