

Checklist: Preparing for and Attending Mediation

You and your child's school have chosen to have a mediation and hopefully resolve one or more disagreements. Careful preparation can help you participate more effectively in the mediation process. The following checklist will help you prepare for mediation.

Your role prior to mediation:

- Make a list of your concerns and prioritize them. Item #1 should be your most important concern.
- Organize documents that support your concerns. Records might include:
 - ✓ School evaluations
 - ✓ Your child's current Individualized Education Program (IEP)
 - ✓ Any private assessments (educational and medical) you have
 - ✓ IEP progress reports, discipline reports, and regular education report cards
 - ✓ Notes from teachers or other informal documents
- Make a list of possible resolution options for each of your concerns. What would be the best possible outcome for your child? What might be an acceptable outcome?
- Anticipate questions school personnel may ask you. Make a list of those questions and consider how you might respond to each one.
- If needed, contact a PACER parent advocate to discuss your concerns and help you prepare for the mediation.
- Please note: If no agreement is reached in mediation, your child will continue to receive services as currently written in his or her IEP.

Your role during mediation:

- Come to the mediation with an open mind and the desire to find a workable solution. Be creative and willing to look at other options that are brought to the table.
- Express your viewpoint as clearly as you can by using supporting documentation.
- Listen respectfully to the school's point of view and do not interrupt. Ask questions and consider their views even if these are different from yours.

- Expect school personnel to listen to your point of view and not interrupt you.
- Your concern may be rooted in the past but keep the emphasis now on planning for the future.
- It is okay to say "I need a break" or ask to meet separately with those supporting you or the mediator.
- If an agreement is reached, read it carefully before signing the document to make sure it clearly describes your understanding of what was agreed to at the meeting.

Resources:

- PACER Center – Tel: (952) 838-9000 Toll free in Greater MN: (800) 537-2347 Website: PACER.org
E-mail: PACER@PACER.org
 - See Publications page for the "Special Education Record Keeping Folder," a helpful tool to organize important papers related to your child's education
- Minnesota Department of Education – Tel: (651) 582-8689.
Website: <http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SpecEdComp/ComplMonitor/AltDispRes/index.html>
- National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)
Website: <http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/>