

Reduced Fee Mediation Referral Program

This program was developed to assist low-income families in achieving an agreed permanent parenting plan to co-parent their child(ren).

Specifically, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is the recipient of a grant that promotes equal access to justice by implementing reduced-fee mediation.

Although the Juvenile Court is not mandated by statute to refer custody proceedings to mediation, Judge Philyaw implemented the above program because parents who agree to co-parenting plans are more likely to follow it for the benefit of their child(ren).

The Juvenile Court Judge and magistrates use the Reduced Fee Mediation Program during custody proceedings in which parties seek to establish shared parenting time with their child(ren).

Parties are referred to mediation to be completed before their next court date. Mediations are conducted by a Rule 31 mediator, certified and approved by the Administrative Office of the Court. (AOC). According to the above-mentioned grant, the maximum fee each party will pay for mediation is \$25.00 per hour. Parties may request an additional reduction of fees by submitting the Income and Expense Form, along with proof of income, to the Court, within five days of the initial court date, or the filing date of their petition. The reduction of fees will be determined by a sliding fee scale provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Upon completion of mediation, the Mediator will send a report to the Court, informing the Judge or ordering magistrate whether the parties reached a mediated agreement.

Cases not resolved in mediation will be heard before the Judge or a magistrate to render the final order for visitation.