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WHAT IS MEDIATION?

Mediation is a process that enables people in disputes or disagreements to resolve their differences with the assistance of an impartial third party . the mediator. Mediators will help to establish direct communication between the parties, listen to the concerns of all involved, and facilitate a constructive problem-solving process. Participation in the mediation process is voluntary and all discussions with the mediators and programme staff are confidential.

A mediator is a trained individual who helps people in a dispute to understand the problem from each person's unique perspective and the helps everyone work together to find solutions and build agreement. Mediators do not act as counsellors, judges, juries or solicitors. In mediation, you and the other parties involved in the dispute are the decision makers. Mediators work with you to facilitate a private, peaceful and productive process through which you can find a mutually acceptable solution to your problem.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- You can discuss your concerns with a mediator, get information to help you approach the other person(s) involved in the dispute and work out a resolution on your own. Many people find that with the right tools and a little encouragement they CAN do it themselves!
- You may want to personally contact the other person(s) involved and suggest mediation. Our written materials can help you to explain the convenience and benefits of using this process and help you to persuade your neighbour to participate in mediation.
- You may also request that a mediator contact the other person(s) in order to explain your concerns, learn of their perspective and invite them to work with you to find a resolution. The mediator will work with all parties to find the best way to resolve the problem. You may choose to meet together with the help of co-mediators in a joint session. Day and evening hours are available for mediation sessions at convenient locations within the district. The mediators record your agreements and everyone receives a signed copy. This is the only written record of the joint session.

For more information about Community Accord, please visit: www.communityaccord.com

SOME WAYS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

- **TALK DIRECTLY:** Assuming that there is no threat of physical violence, talk directly to the person with whom you have the problem. Direct conversation is much more effective than sending a letter, banging on the wall, throwing a rock, or complaining to someone else.
- **CHOOSE A GOOD TIME:** Plan ahead and allow yourselves enough time for a thorough discussion. Don't start talking about the dispute just as the other person is leaving to make dinner, for example. Try to talk in a quiet place where you can both be comfortable and undisturbed for as long as the discussion takes.
- **PLAN AHEAD:** Think about what you want to say ahead of time. Explain what the problem is and how it affects you.
- **DON'T BLAME OR NAME-CALL:** Antagonising the other person only makes it harder for him or her to hear you and understand your concerns. Don't blame the other person for everything or begin the conversation with your opinion of what should be done.
- **GIVE INFORMATION:** Don't interpret the other person's behaviour: "You are blocking my driveway on purpose just to make me mad!" Instead, give information about your own feelings: "When your car blocks my driveway, I get angry because I can't get to work on time."
- **LISTEN:** Give the other person a chance to tell his or her side of the conflict completely. Relax and listen; try to learn how the other person feels.
- **SHOW THAT YOU ARE LISTENING:** Although you may not agree with what is being said, tell the other person that you hear him or her and are glad that you are discussing the problem together.
- **TALK IT ALL THROUGH:** Once you start, get all of the issues and feelings out into the open. Don't leave out the part that seems too difficult to discuss or too insignificant to be important. Your solution will work best if all issues are discussed thoroughly.
- **WORK ON A SOLUTION:** When you have reached this point in the discussion, start working on a solution. Two or more people cooperating are much more effective than one person telling another to change. Be specific: "I will turn my music off at midnight" is better than a vague "I won't play loud music anymore."
- **FOLLOW THROUGH:** Agree to check with each other at specific times to make sure that the agreement is still working – then really do it!
- **CONTACT COMMUNITY ACCORD:** if you are unable to resolve the problem yourself or if you need assistance to contact your neighbour.