

# Mediation

## Heather Fournier, Director of Mediation Service

Mediation is a voluntary conflict resolution process where a trained, neutral person facilitates communication, connection, and compassion between parties to reach a mutually acceptable resolution. Our mediation department has multiple mediation types including Civil, Access to Visitation, Toledo Public Schools (“TPS”) Truancy, Child Protection, Permanent Custody, Victim-Offender, Family Conflict, Truancy, and Contributing.

**Civil Mediation** is a child-focused process empowering never married co-parents to create a parenting plan and address legal issues. Parenting plans are jointly crafted by co-parents to address distinct family needs such as decision making, living arrangements, holidays, vacations, transportation, clothing, school, financial support, medical and dental care, insurance, tax exemptions, child support, moving, respect, religion and extended families. Parenting plans tailored to a family’s unique needs provide guidelines that support responsible co-parenting. There were 673 civil mediations conducted in 2017.

**Access to Visitation Mediations** are funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to provide free civil mediations to families meeting certain requirements. The primary goal of the grant is to facilitate non-custodial parents’ contact and involvement with their children while encouraging the payment of child support. Through this grant, non-custodial parents are connected with children to preserve the family relationship. There were about 143 Access to Visitation agreements mediated in 2017.

**TPS Truancy Prevention Mediations** are funded through an ODJFS grant and Title I grant to improve students’ on-time, daily attendance. TPS and the Mediation Department coordinate to ensure that mediators are at specified TPS schools regularly to mediate attendance issues with schools, parents and students. These mediations take place in TPS schools where mediators meet parents where they are. This program engages parents to comply with TPS standards and to act responsibly. There were approximately 1,075 TPS Truancy Prevention Mediations agreements reached in 2017.

**Child Protection Mediation** is a collaborative problem solving process involving an impartial and neutral person who facilitates constructive negotiation and communication among parents, lawyers, child protection professionals, and possibly others, in an effort to reach a consensus regarding how to resolve issues of concern when children are alleged to be abused, neglected or abandoned. Child protection mediation is a family preservation process supporting parents’

procedural understanding, case plan knowledge and stakeholder relationship awareness so that parents clearly comprehend reunification requirements. There were 28 child protection mediations conducted in 2017.

**Permanent Custody Mediation** is a child-focused process that provides parents a realistic view of trial outcome and a dignified opportunity to plan their child’s future. Permanent Custody mediations ensure balance between the consequences of dependency, neglect or abuse when parental rehabilitation is unlikely. There were 8 permanent custody mediations in 2017.

**Victim Offender Mediation** is a process, funded by a Reclaim grant that gives victims of property crimes or minor assaults the opportunity to meet the perpetrators of these crimes in a safe and structured setting, with the goal of holding the offenders directly accountable while providing important assistance to victims. These mediations ensure balance between consequences and rehabilitation while holding offenders accountable for their actions. There were approximately 98 unruly delinquency mediation agreements reached in 2017.

In court-based **Truancy and Contributing Mediations**, students with habitual truancy issues, or parents struggling to get children to school, talk with school officials, educational specialists, and parents to identify attendance barriers and identify community resources that can bolster the family and support every day, on time attendance. Reclaim funds a portion of our in court truancy mediations. These mediations ensure balance between consequences and rehabilitation while holding offenders accountable for their actions. There were 67 truancy mediation agreements reached and 189 contributing mediation agreements reached in 2017.

**Family Conflict Mediation** is a program, funded by RECLAIM Ohio grants funds (provided by the Ohio Department of Youth Services), where family members can talk with youth who have acted violently to determine whether that youth can safely return home. This program preserves family by encouraging youth to use de-escalating skills and communicate with family members. There were 118 family conflict mediation agreements reached in 2017.

**Very Important Parent Program** In 2017, various Lucas County Juvenile Court employees discussed the conflict’s negative impact on children. Based on conversations, Dr. Liza Halloran and Hans Giller developed curriculum for a new program that empowers parents to reduce co-parent conflict. This “Very Important Parent” program is a two-part class where mental

health facilitators lead parents through interactive exercises about child development, communication and conflict resolution. VIP helps preserve families by empowering parents to diffuse conflict and utilize effective parenting skills. Liza and Hans teach the VIP program and they are continuously improving it based upon participant evaluations. VIP began in the fall and approximately 16 parents attended the program in 2017.

