

Mediation Services

Shared Neutrals Alternative Dispute Resolution Program
(SNAP)



The Chicago Federal Executive Board (FEB) sponsors the Shared Neutrals Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program to facilitate the use of mediation among federal agencies. The program provides a pool of federal employees who are qualified to serve as objective mediators from outside your agency. Advantages of the service are reduced costs, as the program is free of charge and requires minimal paper work. Agencies are encouraged, but not required to have a Mediator in the SNAP program to utilize the services.

What is Mediation?

In mediation, a trained neutral individual helps people discuss and resolve problems, or narrow and clarify issues. The process encourages joint problem solving in which people gain an understanding of each others' points of view. Mediation provides a safe and confidential environment for people to talk through their issues. Participation is voluntary and confidential. When mediation is used, both parties retain control because they each have a role in the final decisions.

Why Use Mediation?

Successful mediation helps agencies avoid time consuming and costly investigations. The average cost of an EEOC complaint from investigations through the final agency decision without a hearing, is over \$16,000. Moreover, the final cost with an agency decision and a hearing, can cost over \$26,000 from start to finish. Can your agency afford NOT to utilize SNAP?

When Should Mediation be Used?

Mediate any time you have an unresolved workplace conflict. Conflict happens at work every day. If ignored, some conflicts increase tensions, lower productivity, and erode trust in the organization. Mediation offers a positive way to settle conflict quickly and informally.

Who Can Use FEB FREE Mediation Services?

Mediation services are available to all member organizations of the Chicago Federal Executive Board and its Federal Executive Association partners. SNAP mediators may mediate anywhere participating agencies are located. SNAP services are FREE; however, the requesting agency is responsible for any travel costs (\$50 or less), and any logistical support associated with a requested mediation.

Who are the Mediators?

Mediators are federal employees of agencies that participate in the SNAP program. They come from all types of federal agencies and levels of jobs. When mediating, these employees serve agencies other than their own. This ensures that they are truly neutral. The mediators have completed at least 32 hours of formal mediation training and have been certified by the SNAP Committee of the Chicago Federal Executive Board.

What Types of Workplace Disputes are Appropriate for This Service?

The Program's current mediations are "internal" workplace mediations (Internal means involving employees of participating agencies only). Agencies may choose to limit which types of cases they will refer to the Program. In addition, there are some cases that are not appropriate for mediation through this program, regardless of individual agency policy. The program does not accept the following cases:

- expected to take more than 24 working hours (the vast majority will require fewer than 24 hours)
- both parties do not sign the mediation agreement
- involve criminal activity.

The Process

When all conflicted parties within an agency have agreed to utilize the Shared Neutrals ADR Program and signed the Agreement to Mediate, the Agency Liaison will contact SNAP by calling the current Intake Coordinator listed on the Chicago FEB website. The Intake Coordinator will obtain all the necessary information on the case and assign a mediator. The mediator will contact the Agency Liaison to arrange a time and place for mediation. The Agency Liaison can provide necessary agency background. All information regarding the mediation is confidential. Further details on the process are available in the SNAP Handbook.

Agency Participation

To enter the Program, agencies must submit a letter to the SNAP Committee signed by the local agency head. The letter must contain the following:

- name and office phone number of the agency liaison authorized to request a SNAP mediation
- any type of case which your agency wishes to exclude from the program
- specific forms your agency wishes to use that differ from those included in the Handbook
- any other specific requirements of your agency
- an explicit statement that no member of your agency will retaliate against any other member of your agency because of his/her decision to participate or withdraw from a SNAP mediation

Note: All agency-specific requested items are subject to review and approval by the SNAP Committee. It is the responsibility of each agency to promptly notify the SNAP Committee of any change to their agency liaison and any requested agency-specific items not previously considered by the SNAP Committee.

A team is available to explain the benefits of the Program to participating agencies considering participation.

For more information please contact the FEB Staff office: (312) 353-6790 / chicagofeb@gsa.gov

Agreement to Mediate

This is an agreement between _____ and _____ (the parties) to enter into mediation.

1. The mediators are neutral facilitators who will help the parties develop their own solutions.
2. Everyone is committed to this process.
3. Everyone understands mediation is not a substitute for independent legal advice. The Mediators are not the legal representative of any of the parties and will not give legal advice.
4. Everyone agrees the mediation is confidential, unless otherwise agreed to by the parties. The parties agree they will not call the mediators to be witnesses, nor will their documents be subpoenaed. However, the mediators are bound to report information as required by statute or court order (5 U.S.C. 574). Agreed-upon exceptions to confidentiality are:
5. Information originating during the mediation will be used only for the purposes of the mediation, except as required by law.
6. The parties agree to make a good-faith effort to work together with the aid of the mediators and to make full disclosure of all relevant information.
7. While all intend to continue with mediation until an agreement is reached, anyone may withdraw from mediation at any time. If a party decides to withdraw from mediation he/she will make best efforts to discuss this decision with the other party and the mediators.
8. The mediators will stop the mediation if they feel an impasse has been reached, if they cannot maintain their neutrality, or if for any other reason they cannot perform their role in an ethical and effective manner. The mediators will also make best efforts to discuss this decision with the parties.
9. The parties waive any right of action, in any form whatsoever, they may have against the mediators, observers, the SNAP Committee, and the Federal Executive Board, for any allegation of wrongful conduct on their part while acting in the course of mediation.
10. The parties agree not to seek in any form whatsoever, or in any manner whatsoever, any documents sent to, or used by, the Federal Executive Board's Shared Neutrals ADR Program.

Party (Signature and Date)

Party (Signature and Date)

This agreement must be used for all FEB mediations. The SNAP Committee reserves the right to approve any additional agency agreements that may be tailored to the needs of the parties or the agency.

Request to Mediate

Email this completed form to the Mediation Intake Coordinator at chicagofeb@gsa.gov

Date of Request: ____/____/____ Agency: _____

Agency Point of Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@_____.GOV

Reason for Mediation (select one):

Workplace Dispute:

Pre-EEO Complaint:

EEO Complaint (after entering formal process)

Other (Please specify): _____

INFORMATION

Party #1 Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@_____.GOV

Name of Representative (if applicable): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@_____.GOV

Party #2 Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@_____.GOV

Name of Representative (if applicable): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@_____.GOV

If additional parties will participate in this mediation, please list additional names at the bottom of this document.

Both Parties are Available to Mediate on the following dates:

____/____/____,
____/____/____,
____/____/____

Recommended location to mediate: _____

Unless specified otherwise, co-mediators will work with your primary mediator, this allows us to train future mediators.

Written request to mediator: FEB assumes the agency request to mediate is on file. Please provide a copy to the mediator.