

Elder Mediation

Empowering Older Adults and Their Families

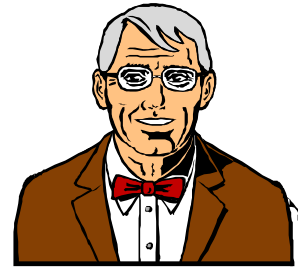
With advancing years, elders often find themselves in disputes that create emotional stress and can lead to disruption in relationships with their families. Collaboration between elders and interested individuals, instead of antagonism, enables elders to maximize their capabilities and to maintain their self-esteem. A mediator can help to improve communication and mutual understanding among all parties related to the elders' well-being. A benefit of elder mediation is that it can enhance the latter years of elders and those who care for them.

ISSUES OF OLDER ADULTS

When I was a volunteer for the King County Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, I worked as an advocate for elders in nursing homes. In this capacity, I became familiar with a wide range of conflict situations that regularly arise as a result of aging, and believe many of these issues could be effectively addressed through mediation.

Living Situation: When the question arises as to elders' ability to continue to live at home, many concerns and considerations have to be dealt with. Under what conditions and with what kind of assistance/services can people remain in their homes? What housing options are available to them? Who else is involved with and affected by elders' living situations, such as family members, friends and service providers?

Personal Care: Health care providers, support personnel, other residents, staff, and management in a multiple-resident situation may all be impacted by the choices of elders and their families. There may be disagreements to resolve between and among all of these participants.



Financial Issues and Estate Planning: Neutrals

can assist family members to come to agreement over powers of attorney, roles of executors and trustees, and asset management, so that attorneys can draw up the appropriate legal documents.

Social Life and Activities: Leading a full life requires agreements on a range of topics, including resources, transportation, schedules for appointments, levels of capabilities in many areas. Dealing with people who are different from those with whom the elder is familiar can cause friction and confusion. What are the elder's key needs and who are the other people involved in meeting these needs?

Spirituality: Spiritual and emotional needs change, and a renewed desire for awareness or rejection of their own spiritual expression can lead to confusion or turmoil for elders. End of life questions often become a concern to older individuals and those who are closest to them, and they may have difficulty dealing with such issues.

Consumer Issues: Being a consumer in our complex society can lead to upset, dissatisfaction, confusion frustration and anger. Mediation can assist elders resolve the conflicts that arise.

