

## Employees' Mediation Service – Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. If I need more information about mediation before committing to it, who can I ask?**

There are a number of people you can approach to get more information about mediation. You can ask your Union President, a staff rep, or shop steward to explain the process to you. You can contact the mediation coordinator, Claire Sabiston, at the school board office (604-534-7891 Ext 228) and ask her to have a mediator contact you to explain the process and/or meet with you to discuss what to expect in a mediation. Look for brochures describing the Employees' Mediation Service on display at your school. In addition, information about the service is posted on the School District's Web site ([www.sd35.bc.ca](http://www.sd35.bc.ca)) under the 'Staff' tab ('Miscellaneous' heading on bottom left) and under the 'Employment' tab ('General' heading on bottom left) or you can locate it by using the search feature.

### **2. How can I be sure that people at the board office or at my school won't find out about my participation in mediation?**

Mediation is a confidential process. The mediation coordinator is careful not to disclose names of participants except to the mediators involved. The coordinator will tell you what absence code to use while attending the mediation so you should not have to explain to an administrator or supervisor why you will be absent. There are no records kept at the board office indicating names of mediation participants.

### **3. Do I have to use sick days while I'm attending mediation?**

No. The absence code you will be asked to use ensures that your sick days are not used while you attend mediation. The Human Resources Department covers the cost of a TOC or substitute/spare if needed so there is no cost to your school.

### **4. How long does mediation usually take?**

Usually mediations take about 1.5 days. The mediators meet with each party individually for about an hour, usually a day or two before the actual mediation. Participants are asked to allow a full day for the actual mediation.

### **5. Where does mediation take place?**

Mediations are held in a neutral location that is convenient and comfortable for all those involved. In most cases, the mediators use a meeting room at the school board office that is quiet and private. If the parties involved prefer, another location can be arranged such as the Langley Teachers' Association office or the CUPE office.

### **6. What if I'm not sure I can get time off work to participate in mediation?**

Acting on an opportunity to resolve a workplace conflict is important and something administrators and supervisors will support. Participating in mediation in most cases is well worth the time invested. Resolving conflict often results in less absenteeism and a healthier work environment. Those who don't get the help they need to resolve conflict often take time off work due to stress or illness, absences that mediation can help reduce.

**7. I would like to try mediation but what if the person I'm having a conflict with says no?**

Mediation is voluntary and in order to be successful, both parties must participate willingly. Although some people may initially be reluctant, in many cases participants will eventually realize that a resolution of the conflict is necessary. People vary in the amount of time they need to consider mediation as a viable option and to become comfortable with the process. In the meantime, you may want to talk to a staff rep, shop steward, or colleague you trust to find out if they can assist you by talking to the other person about the possibility of mediation.

**8. Can I have a union representative attend the mediation with me?**

No, union representatives are not present during mediations. In order to protect the privacy of the people involved, discussions during mediation must be kept confidential. Mediation is not about taking sides but rather is about facilitating communication between the parties in conflict and maintaining and improving relationships. This process is more easily accomplished with the assistance of neutral mediators.

**9. Who are the mediators?**

At present, the District relies primarily on three experienced mediators: a CUPE Local 1260 member, Rita Kuby, and two former school counsellors who are now retired, Sue MacKenzie and Perry Haddock.