

Mediation is an important service whereby a trained mediator acts as a third-party facilitator to help the tenant and property owner or homeowner and mortgage holder develop mutually agreed-upon solutions to identified problems. Problems are not limited to back rent or past due mortgage payments, but also include issues such as repairs, housing code violations, and communication problems.

The Mediation Process is a structured procedure in which the neutral third party, the Mediator assists the parties in reaching a negotiated settlement of their differences. Mediators act as impartial enablers and help the parties identify and discuss issues of mutual concern, explore solutions, and develop mutually acceptable settlements. Mediation is usually a voluntary practice that results in a signed agreement that defines the future behavior of the parties. The Mediator is not empowered to impose a decision or outcome on the parties.

The Mediation session usually occurs in a private, informal setting. The Mediator provides an opening statement that includes the establishment of ground rules regarding the Mediation Process and what the Mediator expects from the disputants throughout the process.

Key ground rules are:

- Mediation is non-binding,
- Process is voluntary,
- Mediator shall be neutral and impartial,
- Each party should respect the other, and
- Each party should allow the other party equal opportunity to express oneself throughout the process.

During Mediation, emphasis is placed on encouraging the parties to develop creative and innovative ways to address the rental or mortgage arrears, e.g., time payments or bartering services. In addition, tenants and homeowners are expected to contribute as much as they can to reduce the arrears. Mediators also work with the property owners and mortgage holders to reduce costs or the arrearage.