

Randy L. Fisher, LISW

As a mediator in private practice I believe the goal of mediation is to foster open and honest communication between all parties, ensure a safe environment where the rules of confidentiality are observed, and have a place where each person is asked to show respect to the other mediation participants even during disagreements. When practicing the above, mediation becomes a collaborative way to resolve disputes without destroying relationships and as a result agreements are more likely to be reached between all parties. I also hold to the principle that one should be in charge of his/her own destiny rather than have other people make decisions that can impact one's life or the life of one's child forever.

I have over 11 years experience in mediation and conducted more than 1100 mediation sessions. Over 200 of these mediations were multiparty mediations, which may include parents, special advocates, attorneys, representatives from a school or agency, relatives and, at times and only when appropriate, the child or children. I also mediate truancy and educational issues in elementary and middle schools. As a result and from working with special education teachers and parents of special needs children, I am very familiar with the laws and regulations related to special education and in developing individual education plan (IEP's) and called upon to work with high conflict situations in both large and rural school districts.

The purpose of public education is for all children to have the fullest access to educational opportunities and to receive the most appropriate education and services according to his/her needs and special circumstances. Therefore in mediation it is encouraged that parents and school personnel work together and to think 'outside the box' to develop agreements and IEP's and not using a 'cookie-cutter' approach to the educational needs of a child. It is parents who know his/her child better than anyone and therefore it is their involvement in the education process is crucial for the child to succeed.

I hold a B.S. in Elementary Education and Music Education from the University of Akron and a Masters of Science in Social Administration from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. Throughout my career, I have always worked with children in some capacity. Initially I was employed with Summit County Children Services as a case worker where my work included making relative placements, working with the schools and courts, and most importantly, reuniting children with their families. Subsequently, I worked as a psychiatric social worker at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio in addition to maintaining a part-time private counseling practice and working for a home health care agency. I next accepted an offer to work with a private agency to manage the Medicaid Disability Waiver and Private Duty Nursing Program for the state of Ohio. I had the opportunity to work directly with the children who were recipients of the Medicaid Waiver program and their parents and caregivers, and as a result acquired a more thorough understanding of the intricacies and unique needs of children with disabilities and the persons who sustain them.

Currently, in addition to my mediation practice, I contract with Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio as a child therapist and family counselor, working with children whose parents are divorced or separated. In that setting I encourage parents to explore how communication between them and with the child has a direct effect upon the child's emotional well-being.

"Growth begins when we start to accept our own weakness." This quote by Jean Vanier, an advocate for adults and children with developmental disabilities, is one that is always remembered as my work is performed with children and their families.

In my spare time I enjoy directing a choir and playing the organ at a local church, volunteering for the Bassett Hound Rescue and Columbus Aids Task force, and running.