

Key Questions to Ask When Hiring a Dispute Resolution Professional

1. What are their qualifications?
Basic mediation training is a 40-hour course but mediators need a lot of case experience in order to be competent. Most professional mediators have taken many hours of advanced training. Find out about the mediator's training and case experience.
2. What is their mediation approach?
There are different theories and philosophies of mediation. The mediator should be able to explain their mediation approach. If you need an evaluative mediator or a settlement conference facilitator then ask the mediator if they use these techniques.
3. Do they have any specialized experience or expertise?
This will give you a fuller picture of their background.
4. How many cases have they handled in the particular subject area?
This will give you an idea of their level of experience.
5. Do they have references from recent cases?
A mediator should be able to give you references of parties or advocates for whom s/he has provided services. A reference can talk about the skills of the mediator without violating any confidentiality.
6. Do they have any other professional credentials?
While there is no mandatory certification in Maryland there is a voluntary professional performance based certification that is sponsored by the Maryland Council for Dispute Resolution. Mediators who undergo this process have mediated a role play on camera and have gone through a detailed evaluation of their skills.
7. Is there a conflict of interest?
The mediator's key role is to be neutral. If s/he has any kind of relationship with one of the parties, even if only tangential, that might get in the way of their neutrality or may be problematic for the other party. Such conflicts should be avoided.