



ORION

A Professional Internship/Mentoring Program
For Family Mediators

MISSION OF ORION PROGRAM

We as professional mediators have a responsibility to the field of conflict resolution/mediation, to our emerging practitioners, and to the clients of those practitioners. We are committed to mentoring new professionals to share our experience and skill.

YOUR NEXT STEP IN CREATING A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

In order to enter the program, the applicant will be interviewed and assessed by the person they are contacting as their primary mentor. The intern, after their acceptance, moves through the program at a rate determined by the primary mentor. For example, an intern may need only one session in one stage but need to remain in another stage for a longer time in order to strengthen a particular set of skills or abilities. Acceptance into the program by individual program mentors.

Note – while the internship program is designed to meet the requirements of the Vermont Family Court Program, it is not associated with VFCMP and is not the only source of supervision that is required in order to be admitted into VFCMP. In order to provide a high quality service, however, it is the only form of supervision/mentoring that participating internship program mentors do for family mediation.

Once in the program, the intern can expect to be working regularly with either their mentor or another mentor in the program. The mentors share information about the intern's progress.

All program interns are entitled to:

- consultation phone calls which will happen once a month and will be led by a program mentor
- use of a group communication board by which interns may ask questions and mentors may post information
- participation in quarterly meetings of interns and mentors for case reviews and consultations
- telephone consultation with primary mentor on any case in which the intern is the solo or lead mediator
- back-up consultation with other mentors in the event that the primary mentor is not available
- multiple opportunities to draft documents and have supervision/consultation on their work
- certificate to verify to Vermont Family Court Mediation Program, Association for Conflict Resolution or other organizations that the intern has been a primary, co-mediator, or solo mediator in X number of mediations (or sessions).

Phases of the program

Level 1:

Observation/Assistance – in which the intern becomes acquainted with the Divorce/Family mediation process and assists the mentor by taking notes, asking clarification questions, etc.

Level 2:

Second chair mediator – in which the intern is more actively engaged but following the lead of the lead mediator.

Level 3:

Co-mediator – in which the intern and mentor share equal responsibility for the mediator role. The intern is expected to think strategically and actively participate in helping the parties do their work. The mentor remains the “safety net” or default decision maker if there is a difference of opinion on direction.

Level 4:

Primary or sole mediator – the intern has the responsibility for the case with the mentor either serving in a small support role or observing.

The program will meet the standards of the Vermont Family Court Mediation Program requirements for experience. With regard to several of the requirements, the standard for the internship program significantly exceeds the VFCMP standard. The reason for this is that the VFCMP standard was written with the assumption that applicants would have already spent several years in practice before applying. Because mediators are applying earlier in their development, the internship program has set a standard more appropriate to that level of experience.

VFCMP MINIMUM EXPERIENCE/SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

40 hours minimum actual face-to-face mediation experience, to include: 30 hours face-to-face divorce mediation experience. These 30 hours shall represent no less than 3 separate cases. While mediating the 30 hours in divorce/domestic work, in at least 3 separate cases, the applicant mediator shall be working as the primary mediator in the cases, while also working in concurrent supervision/consultation with a VFCMP approved supervisor/consultant as outlined below:

- During the 30 hours work, the applicant mediator shall receive no less than 5 hours direct case supervision/consultation with no more than two separate VFCMP approved supervisor(s)/consultant(s). The supervision/consultation may occur by phone or meeting, specifically for the purpose of case review and preparation. During the course of the 5 hours supervision, the applicant mediator (working as the primary mediator in the case) shall be observed for no less than*

1.5 hours (either in person or by videotape), by one of the approved VFCMP supervisor(s) /consultant(s) while mediating one of the divorce/domestic cases.

- The applicant mediator shall provide copies of all drafts of his/her written summaries and memoranda of the 3 cases while the mediator was in supervision with the VFCMP approved supervisor(s)/consultant(s). These documents must be generated by the applicant mediator. Any revisions and/or written comments and/or suggestions made by the supervisor(s)/consultant(s) must be noted and identified and included in the application.*
- The supervisor(s)/consultant(s) may, in a written document, address the mediator's strengths and weaknesses in the key areas of divorce mediation skills (such as the ability to track information, ability to maintain impartiality, willingness to allow parties to be self-directed, writing memoranda that accurately reflects work done in session, (see VFCMP standards of practice, etc)*

An intern who has recently been trained and has very little experience or practice hours might expect an intern experience something like the following:
(case hours are based on an estimated average of 1.5 hours per session and 2 sessions per case)

- Level 1: 1 - 2 cases (3 - 6 hours) – observe, assist, (does not count toward VFCMP hours)
 - Level 2: 2 - 3 cases (6 – 9 hours) – second chair mediator (not count for VFCMP)
 - Level 3: 2 – 8 cases (6 – 24 hours) – co-mediator (counts for VFCMP)
 - Level 4: 3 – 8 cases (9 - 24 hours) – primary or solo mediator (VFCMP)
 - 8 - 10 hours – debriefing, coaching before and after mediation sessions
 - 6 – 8 hours – document review, revision and commentary
- Approximate minimum hours in program – 35 hours of paid mentor time
(the more pre-preparation and experience the intern has, the more likely it is that these number of hours will be reduced)
Cost \$75 per hour

Total estimated cost - \$2625 (payable by check or credit card in four installments). Additional hours or services will continue to be paid at the \$75 per hour rate.

Additional benefits for interns:

- 12 hours – three 4-hour case review (free benefit of the program)
- 6 – 12 hours – case review phone calls (free benefit of the program)
- Access to web discussion board (free benefit)

Program guidelines:

1. While the intern program does not ensure competence or quality of any intern who has finished the program, it does verify that the intern has progressed from one phase of the program to the next based upon the mentor's assessment that the intern is professional prepared to take on more responsibility for the clients.
2. Interns need to understand that availability of cases varies and therefore mentors cannot guarantee that interns are fully booked up with cases at any given time.
3. The estimated time for the program is six to twelve months.
4. Mentors will not take anyone into the program that has not already had divorce mediation training, met at least 75% of their training requirements, and has at least fifteen hours practice time in the mediator's chair (role play or working with actual clients).
5. The intern may terminate their training for any reason and receive a letter from the mentor stating the number of hours that the intern has worked with them. The intern will receive a full reimbursement for any unused pre-payment.
6. The mentor may terminate the relationship with the student at any time and will provide a letter stating the number of hours that the intern has worked with them. The intern will receive a full reimbursement for any unused pre-payment.

7. Any intern completing the full program will receive a certificate for a professional internship training program indicating the full number of hours worked with the mentor and the number of hours as a solo, primary, or co-mediator which count toward qualifying for VFCMP.
8. While interns are ordinarily not required to attend the monthly phone call meetings or quarterly meetings, a mentor may require it of a particular intern to support their work.
9. The mentor has an ethical requirement to give the intern full and frank feedback about their work and professional demeanor. The mentor will share his/her assessment of the intern's possibilities for success in the field.
10. When possible, the intern may have the opportunity to work with a different mentor for a case. This would only take place in Level 3 or 4 and would be arranged by the primary mentor.
11. The intern may request that they move to a different primary mentor. In that instance, they always have the option to terminate with their current mentor. If the intern wants another mentor, there are no guarantees that they will be accepted by another mentor who may have a waiting list. The new mentor will have a right to speak with any previous program mentors in order to determine whether they wish to accept the intern.
12. If an intern does not take a case for six weeks or refuses or cannot attend more than three mediation sessions in a row, the mentor may return the intern's unused money and remove them from mentoring in order to free time for other interns. The removed intern may come back to the mentor based on mutual agreement and the mentor's available time.
13. Payment for the program is always in advance of work and is in four payments.
14. The services have already been deeply discounted and fees will not be reduced further.