

Rules Governing Certification of Mediators AOSC06-09

Chapter 44, Florida Statutes, places in the Supreme Court of Florida the responsibility for certifying all persons who are eligible to receive court referrals for mediation. Pursuant to Chapter 44, this Court adopted rule 10.100, Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators, specifying the requirements for such mediators.

Chief Justice Harding issued an administrative order on April 11, 2000, entitled “Rules Governing Certification of Mediators,” which superseded previous orders on the subject. The provisions of that order are superseded by this order.

I. Initial Certification

A. Application

The certification application provided by the Dispute Resolution Center (Center) shall be completed by all individuals seeking certification, in accordance with the following procedures:

Upon receiving the list of individuals completing training from a certified mediation training provider, the Center shall send to all individuals on the list an application and information on the certification requirements.

An application shall be complete upon filing. However, if incomplete upon filing, such incomplete application may not remain pending for a period longer than one year. Any application pending more than one year from the date of original filing shall be denied and returned to the applicant. The one-year period shall be tolled during any review by the Center or Mediator Qualifications Board.

Applications must include two original letters of reference attesting to the applicant’s good moral character. These letters must be written by non-family members who are familiar with the experience and qualifications of the applicant.

Any material misrepresentation by the applicant in the application process shall be automatically referred to the Mediator Qualifications Board.

B. Certification Requirements

To obtain certification, an applicant shall meet all certification requirements pursuant to Florida Rule for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators 10.100 and this order. These requirements shall apply to all persons seeking certification as a mediator effective August 1, 2006. However, an applicant may apply under the previous

requirements for a period of one year from August 1, 2006.

Attached is a table which illustrates the contents of this section. Any discrepancy between the table and this certification requirements section shall be resolved in favor of this section.

Point Requirements

County Court Mediators. Any person applying for certification as a county court mediator is required to have 100 points, with 30 points for successful completion of a Florida Supreme Court certified county court mediation training program, ten points for education, and 60 points for mentorship. An applicant must have at least a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Additional points shall also be provided in the sections dealing with education/mediation experience, mentorship, and miscellaneous activities.

Family Mediators. Any person applying for certification as a family mediator is required to have 100 points, with a minimum of 30 points for successful completion of a Florida Supreme Court certified family mediation training program, 25 points for education/mediation experience and 30 points for mentorship. An applicant must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Additional points above the minimum requirements may be awarded for completion of additional education/mediation experience, mentorship, and miscellaneous activities.

Circuit Court Mediators. Any person applying for certification as a circuit court mediator is required to have 100 points, with a minimum of 30 points for successful completion of a Florida Supreme Court certified circuit mediation training program, 25 points for education/mediation experience, and 30 points for mentorship. An applicant must be a member in good standing of The Florida Bar with at least five years of Florida practice and be an active member of The Florida Bar within one year of application for certification; or be a retired trial judge from any United States jurisdiction who was a member in good standing of the bar in the state in which the judge presided for at least five years immediately preceding the year certification is sought. Additional points above the minimum requirements may be awarded for completion of additional education/mediation Experience, mentorship, and miscellaneous activities.

Dependency Mediators. Any person applying for certification as a dependency mediator is required to have 100 points, with a minimum of 30 points for successful completion of a Florida Supreme Court certified dependency mediation training program, 25 points for education/mediation experience, and 40 points for mentorship. An applicant must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Additional points above the minimum requirements may be awarded for completion of additional education/mediation experience, mentorship, and miscellaneous activities.

Point Categories

Mediation Training. Applicants must complete a Florida Supreme Court certified training program for the type of mediation in which they are seeking certification. In order to qualify as a Florida Supreme Court certified training program, a training program must satisfy all of the requirements of Administrative Order AOSC00-9 or any successor order. Applicants shall have completed the requisite certified mediation training program within two years immediately preceding the date of application.

Education/Mediation Experience. Points shall be awarded in accordance with the following schedule (points are only awarded for the highest level of education completed and honorary degrees are not included):

High School Diploma/GED	10 points
Associate's Degree	15 points
Bachelor's Degree	20 points
Master's Degree	25 points
Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution	30 points
Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., J.D., M.D., Ed.D., LL.M)	30 points
Ph.D. from Accredited Conflict Resolution Program	40 points

In addition, five points will be awarded for completion of a graduate level conflict resolution certificate program in an institution which has been accredited by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the American Bar Association, or an entity of equal status.

Any applicant relying on an educational degree shall provide evidence of such degree in the form of a transcript mailed directly from the educational institution to the Center. Such applicant must also enclose a copy of the diploma evidencing such education. In the event that such documentation is unavailable, the applicant must submit another form of appropriate documentation, such as a sworn affidavit.

An additional one point per year will be awarded to a Florida Supreme Court certified mediator for each year that mediator has mediated at least 15 cases of any type. In the alternative, a maximum of five points will be awarded to any mediator, regardless of Florida Supreme Court certification, who has conducted a minimum of 100 mediations over a consecutive five-year period. Any applicant relying on years of mediation experience shall include an affidavit attesting to such experience.

Mentorship. Mentorship shall include observing mediations conducted by

certified mediators and conducting mediations under the supervision and observation of certified mediators. The mentorship requirements for those seeking certification shall be performed in a manner consistent with the following requirements:

The responsibility of structuring a mentorship rests with each trainee. The trainee shall not receive any fees for any case which the trainee utilizes to complete the required mentorship.

All duly certified mediators are required to allow, upon request, a minimum of two mediation observations or supervised mediations per year. The certified mediator shall not charge the trainee any fees to observe a mediation conducted by the certified mediator, but may charge a reasonable fee for observing and supervising a trainee while the trainee conducts a mediation. In addition, the certified mediator shall be entitled to any compensation paid for the mediation.

The certified mediator shall remain in control of the case.

In order for an applicant to be awarded mentorship points, the applicant must work with at least two different certified mediators and the mediations involved must be of the type for which certification is sought.

The confidentiality and privileges provided in the Mediation Confidentiality and Privilege Act shall apply when a trainee serves as a mediator, comediator, or observer.

Ten points will be awarded for each completed supervised mediation and five points for each mediation session observed.

State-funded trial court mediation programs shall assist trainees in completing their mentorship requirements.

Applicants shall provide original signatures of all mentors in relation to all mentorship activity claimed.

Mediation Observations

For each observation required for certification, the trainee must observe an entire session of the type of mediation for which certification is sought, conducted by a certified mediator of the type for which certification is sought. The observation requirement shall not be satisfied by any individual who is a party, participant, or representative in the mediation. A trainee may not fulfill the observation requirements before beginning a certified mediation training program. The observation requirement may be completed prior to the conclusion of the certified mediation training program. An appellate or pre-suit mediation which is or would have been the type of mediation for which certification is sought if it had

been filed in a trial court and if conducted by a certified mediator of the type for which certification is sought may be utilized for observation purposes. A federal court mediation conducted by a certified circuit mediator may be utilized to fulfill a circuit mentorship. Administrative agency mediation conducted under rules and procedures other than those of the state trial courts may not be utilized to fulfill the mentorship requirements.

Supervised Mediations

The requirement that the trainee conduct a mediation under the supervision and observation of a certified mediator may be fulfilled by the trainee comediating with a certified mediator only if, in the opinion of the certified mediator, the trainee had a significant impact on the outcome of or made a substantial contribution to the mediation. At the conclusion of the mediation, the mentor shall determine if the trainee had a significant impact on the outcome of or made a substantial contribution to the mediation. If so, it may qualify as a “supervised” mediation. If not, it will qualify only as an observation.

For purposes of the requirement to conduct mediations, mediation is defined as a complete case, which may consist of multiple sessions. The entire mediation shall be comediated or observed by a certified mediator of the type for which certification is sought. In the event the trainee is only able to participate in a single session of a multisession mediation, such participation qualifies as an observation regardless of the trainee’s level of participation. An appellate or pre-suit mediation which is or would have been the type of mediation for which certification is sought if it had been filed in a trial court and if conducted by a certified mediator of the type for which certification is sought may be utilized for the requirements to conduct mediations under observation and supervision. A federal court mediation conducted by a certified circuit mediator may be utilized to fulfill a circuit mentorship. Administrative agency mediation conducted under rules and procedures other than those of the state trial courts may not be utilized to fulfill the mentorship requirements.

Miscellaneous. Five points shall be awarded to applicants currently licensed or certified in any United States jurisdiction in psychology, accounting, social work, mental health, health care, education, or to practice law or mediation. Such award shall not exceed a total of five points regardless of the number of licenses or certifications obtained. Any applicant requesting certification on the basis of licensure in a profession shall provide all applicable information necessary for the Center to verify such licensure.

Five points shall be awarded for possessing conversational ability in a foreign language as demonstrated by certification by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Test, qualification as a court interpreter, accreditation by the American Translators Association, or approval as a sign language interpreter by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Such award shall not exceed five

total points regardless of the number of languages in which the applicant is proficient.

Five points shall be awarded for each of the following two categories: successful completion of an additional mediation training program (minimum 30 hours in length) certified/approved by a state or court other than Florida in addition to the required Florida Supreme Court certified mediation training program, and certification as a mediator by the Florida Supreme Court. Such award shall not exceed five points per category regardless of the number of trainings completed or certifications obtained.

Any applicant requesting certification on the basis of specific experience shall provide a resume detailing the experience and any other information necessary for the Center to verify such experience.

Fees

The following fees shall be required for the application and certification process:

Application Fee	\$10 (nonrefundable)
Certification Fees	
County	\$40
Family	\$100
Circuit	\$100
Dependency	\$50
Family/Circuit	\$175 (filed simultaneously)
Family/Dependency	\$130 (filed simultaneously)
Circuit/Dependency	\$130 (filed simultaneously)
Family/Dependency/Circuit	\$200 (filed simultaneously)

The \$10 application fee is nonrefundable. Certification fees shall be returned to applicants who, upon review of their applications, are deemed ineligible to be certified. Applicants who are denied certification may reapply upon meeting the qualifications for certification.

Applicants who meet the requirements for mediator certification shall be certified for a two-year period and shall be provided with a certificate from the Supreme Court evidencing such certification.

Review Process

An applicant who disagrees with a finding of ineligibility may object in writing within 35 days of the initial determination of ineligibility as indicated in a certificate of mailing. Any such response shall be reviewed by the Supreme Court Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules and Policy, which may appoint a subcommittee to review such matters, and which shall make a recommendation to the chief justice. The decision of the chief justice shall be final.

II. Certification Renewal

A. Application for Renewal

Mediators seeking continued certification shall be required to file an application for renewal and a completed Continuing Mediator Education Reporting Form. Any material misrepresentation by a mediator in the renewal process shall be automatically referred to the Mediator Qualifications Board.

B. Continuing Mediator Education

The purpose of continuing mediator education (CME) shall be to enhance the participant's professional competence as a mediator. The requirement of CME and the reporting thereof shall apply to all certified mediators seeking renewal and shall be fulfilled in accordance with the following procedures:

General Requirement

In order to qualify as CME, a course or activity shall have significant, current intellectual or practical content and shall constitute an organized program of learning directly related to the practice of mediation. CME shall be conducted by an individual or group qualified by practical or academic experience. All certified mediators (mediators) must complete a minimum of 16 hours of CME, which shall include a minimum four hours of mediator ethics, a minimum of two hours of domestic violence education and a minimum of one hour of diversity/cultural awareness education, in each two year renewal cycle, including the two years following initial certification. In addition, family and dependency mediators must complete an additional two hours of the required 16 hours in domestic violence education per each renewal cycle for a total of four hours. Mediator certification shall not be renewed until all CME requirements are completed.

Mediators who are certified in more than one area must complete 16 hours of CME applicable to each of their areas of certification. Hours completed may be utilized toward more than one area of certification if the subject matter is relevant to the fields of certification. For example, courses on such topics as mediator ethics, domestic violence, and general mediation skills may be credited to any or all of the areas of certification.

At a minimum, 50 percent of the required CME hours must be satisfied by attendance, not as a lecturer or presenter, at a live lecture, live seminar, or an audio/video playback of a seminar attended by a group that discussed the materials presented. Interactive internet presentations may be counted as attendance at a live lecture. Noninteractive internet presentations shall be applied toward the audio-visual category. A maximum of four hours of CME may be earned through mentoring as

defined above. Mentoring activities cannot be applied toward the required ethics, diversity/cultural awareness, or domestic violence CME components.

Attending and lecturing or teaching at the same CME presentation will not entitle a mediator to additional credit. The prohibition against repeat attendance shall not apply to annual conferences and yearly updates.

Continuing education completed for another profession's continuing education requirement may be used as CME if the material bears directly on the mediator's mediation practice and complies with the CME guidelines set forth in this order.

Definition

A CME hour is defined as 50 minutes. CME may be completed during the mediator's renewal cycle in any of the following formats:

- (1) attending a live lecture or seminar;
- (2) listening to or viewing an audio or video presentation of a lecture or seminar with a group, and participating in a discussion of the materials presented;
- (3) listening to or viewing audio or video presentations;
- (4) comediating or supervising trainees as part of the trainees' mentorship requirements;
- (5) participating in internet presentations;
- (6) lecturing or teaching in CME courses; and
- (7) authoring or editing written materials submitted for publication and that have significant intellectual or practical content directly related to the practice of mediation.

Reporting Requirements

Mediators must maintain proof of attendance of CME or other appropriate documentation and must report their CME at the end of each two-year renewal cycle on the Center's renewal form. The mediator shall be responsible to keep all records relating to CME, which records shall be subject to audit. In addition, the mediator must certify that he or she has read the current Florida mediation rules, statutes, and procedures.

Any CME hours completed may be utilized for only one renewal cycle. Hours in excess of the requirement shall not be carried forward to the next renewal cycle.

If all other qualifications for renewal are met, but a mediator is deficient in CME credits, the mediator shall be notified in writing and certification shall be continued for 90 days from the notice of noncompliance. During those 90 days, the mediator shall complete all remaining CME requirements in order to be eligible for renewal.

Review Process

A mediator who disagrees with a finding of deficiency may object in writing within 35 days of the initial determination of deficiency as indicated in a certificate of mailing. Any such response shall be reviewed by the Supreme Court Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules and Policy, which may appoint a subcommittee to review such matters, and which shall make a recommendation to the chief justice. The decision of the chief justice shall be final.

C. Fees

Renewal fees shall be at the same levels as for initial certification. All mediators seeking renewal shall be responsible for these fees. However, for renewals which are filed timely, the \$40 county mediator renewal fee will be waived upon written confirmation from the ADR Program Director (or designee) that the mediator served as a volunteer in the county court mediation program during the prior certification period.

Mediators whose certification has lapsed may renew certification up to 180 days from the lapse date upon payment of an additional late fee in an amount equal to the mediator's renewal fee. Mediators who apply for renewal within 365 days after the lapse date will be required to pay a late fee equal to five times the mediator's renewal fee, up to a maximum of \$500. Mediators who apply for certification after day 365 will be required to meet the initial requirements for certification, including satisfactory completion of a certified mediation training program and fulfillment of the mentorship requirements. For purposes of this paragraph, the lapse date reverts back to the initial renewal date, notwithstanding any CME extensions.

A mediator may request an extension of the renewal requirements and a waiver of any penalties for an extraordinary hardship. If such request is denied, a request for review may be taken to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules and Policy Committee, which may appoint a subcommittee to review such matters, and which shall make a recommendation to the chief justice. The chief justice's decision shall be final.

III. Administrative Responsibility

Administrative responsibility for implementation of the provisions of Chapter 44, Florida Statutes; rule 10.100, Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators; and this administrative order shall be with the Dispute Resolution Center of the Office of the State Courts Administrator.

All certification, application, renewal, and late fees shall be deposited in the Supreme Court's Mediation and Arbitration Trust Fund to be used to provide support for implementing the applicable statutes, rules, and this administrative order.

Points Needed Per Area of Certification		Minimum Points Required in Each Area
County	100	30 certified county mediation training; 10 education (minimum HS Diploma/GED); 60 mentorship
Family	100	30 certified family mediation training; 25 education/ mediation experience (minimum Bachelor's Degree); 30 mentorship [and requires 15 additional points]
Dependency	100	30 certified dependency mediation training; 25 education/mediation experience (minimum Bachelor's Degree); 40 mentorship [and requires 5 additional points]
Circuit	100	30 certified circuit mediation training, 25 education/mediation experience (minimum Bachelor's Degree); 30 mentorship; [and requires 15 additional points] ⁱ

Education/Mediation Experience (points awarded for highest level of education received)			
HS Diploma/GED	10 points	Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution	30
Associate's Degree	15 points	Doctorate (e.g., JD, MD, PhD, EdD, LLM)	30
Bachelor's Degree	20 points	Ph.D. from accredited CR Program	40
Master's Degree	25 points	Graduate Certificate CR Program	+5
Florida certified mediator: 1 point per year in which mediated at least 15 mediations (any type) OR any mediator: – 5 points for minimum of 100 mediations (any type) over a 5 year period			

Mentorship- must work with at least 2 different certified mediators and must be completed for the type of certification sought	
Observation	5 points each session
Supervised Mediation	10 points each complete mediation

Miscellaneous Points	
Licensed to practice law, psychology, accounting, social work, mental health, health care, education or mediation in any US jurisdiction	5 points (total)
Florida Certified Mediator	5 points (total)
Foreign Language Conversational Ability as demonstrated by certification by ACFTL Oral Proficiency Test; qualified as a court interpreter; or accredited by the American Translators Association; Sign Language Interpreter as demonstrated by approval by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf	5 points (total)
Completion of additional mediation training program (minimum 30 hours in length) certified/approved by a state or court other than Florida	5 points (total)

ⁱ NOTE: Per Administrative Order AOSC06-9, "Any person applying for certification as a circuit mediator must [also] be a member in good standing of The Florida Bar with at least five years of Florida practice and be an active member of The Florida Bar within one year of application for certification; or be a retired trial judge from any US jurisdiction who was a member in good standing of the bar in the state in which the judge presided for at least five years immediately preceding the year certification is sought." The Florida Bar has been requested to file comments on the revisions to circuit mediation by August 9, 2006.