

**Florida Rules of Civil Procedure  
Rules 1.700 – 1.830**

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**Rule 1.720 Mediation Procedures**

(a) Interim or Emergency Relief. A party may apply to the court for interim or emergency relief at any time. Mediation shall continue while such a motion is pending absent a contrary order of the court or a decision of the mediator to adjourn pending disposition of the motion. Time for completing mediation shall be tolled during any periods where mediation is interrupted pending resolution of such a motion.

(b) Sanctions for Failure to Appear. If a party fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, the court upon motion shall impose sanctions, including an award of mediator and attorneys' fees and other costs, against the party failing to appear. If a party to mediation is a public entity required to conduct its business pursuant to chapter 286, Florida Statutes, that party shall be deemed to appear at a mediation conference by the physical presence of a representative with full authority to negotiate on behalf of the entity and to recommend settlement to the appropriate decision-making body of the entity. Otherwise, unless stipulated by the parties or changed by order of the court, a party is deemed to appear at a mediation conference if the following persons are physically present:

- (1) The party or its representative having full authority to settle without further consultation.
- (2) The party's counsel of record, if any.
- (3) A representative of the insurance carrier for any insured party who is not such carrier's outside counsel and who has full authority to settle up to the amount of the plaintiff's last demand or policy limits, whichever is less, without further consultation.

(c) Adjournments. The mediator may adjourn the mediation conference at any time and may set times for reconvening the adjourned conference notwithstanding rule 1.710(a). No further notification is required for parties present at the adjourned conference.

(d) Counsel. The mediator shall at all times be in control of the mediation and the procedures to be followed in the mediation. Counsel shall be permitted to communicate privately with their clients. In the discretion of the mediator and with the agreement of the parties, mediation may proceed in the absence of counsel unless otherwise ordered by the court.

(e) Communication with Parties. The mediator may meet and consult privately with any party or parties or their counsel.

(f) Appointment of the Mediator.

- (1) Within 10 days of the order of referral, the parties may agree upon the appointment of a stipulation with the court designating certified mediator ÷

~~(A) a certified mediator; or~~

~~(B) a mediator, other than a senior judge, who is not certified as a mediator but who, in the opinion of the parties and upon review by the presiding judge, is otherwise qualified by training or experience to mediate all or some of the issues in the particular case.~~

- (2) If the parties cannot agree upon a certified mediator within 10 days of the order of referral, the plaintiff or petitioner shall so notify the court within 10 days of the expiration of the period to agree on a mediator, and the court shall appoint a certified mediator selected by rotation or by such other procedures as may be adopted by administrative order of the chief judge in the circuit in which the action is pending. At the request of either party to a circuit case, the court shall appoint a certified circuit court mediator who is a member of The Florida Bar.
- (3) If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a court cannot serve, a substitute mediator can be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator. A mediator shall not mediate a case assigned to another mediator without the agreement of the parties or approval of the court. A substitute mediator shall have the same qualifications as the original mediator.

(g) Compensation of the Mediator. The mediator may be compensated or uncompensated. When the mediator is compensated in whole or part by the parties, the presiding judge may determine the reasonableness of the fees charged by the mediator. In the absence of a written agreement providing for the mediator's compensation, the mediator shall be compensated at the hourly rate set by the presiding judge in the referral order. Where appropriate, each party shall pay a proportionate share of the total charges of the mediator. Parties may object to the rate of the mediator's compensation within 15 days of the order of referral by serving an objection on all other parties and the mediator.

**Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure**  
**Rule 8.290**

**Rule 8.290 Dependency Mediation**

(a) Definitions. The following definitions apply to this rule:

(1) “Dependency matters” means proceedings arising under Chapter 39, Florida Statutes.

(2) “Dependency mediation” means mediation of dependency matters.

(3) “Mediation” means a process whereby a neutral third person called a mediator acts to encourage and facilitate the resolution of a dispute between two or more parties. It is an informal and non-adversarial process with the objective of helping the disputing parties reach a mutually acceptable and voluntary agreement. In mediation, decision-making authority rests with the parties. The role of the mediator includes, but is not limited to, assisting the parties in identifying issues, fostering joint problem-solving, and exploring settlement alternatives.

(b) Applicability. This rule applies only to mediation of dependency matters.

(c) Compliance with Statutory Time Requirements. Dependency mediation shall be conducted in compliance with the statutory time requirements for dependency matters.

(d) Referral. Except as provided by this rule, all matters and issues described in subdivision (a)(1) may be referred to mediation. All referrals to mediation shall be in written form, shall advise the parties of their right to counsel, and shall set a date for hearing before the court to review the progress of the mediation. The mediator or mediation program shall be appointed by the court or stipulated to by the parties. If the court refers the matter to mediation, the mediation order shall address all applicable provisions of this rule. The mediation order shall be served on all parties and on counsel under the provisions of the Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure.

(e) Appointment of the Mediator.

(1) Court Appointment. The court, in the order of referral to mediation, shall appoint a certified mediator selected by rotation or by such other procedures as may be adopted by administrative order of the chief judge in the circuit in which the action is pending.

(2) Party Stipulation. Within 10 days of the filing of the order of referral to mediation, the parties may agree upon a stipulation with the court designating:

~~(A) another certified mediator of dependency matters to replace the one selected by the judge; or~~

~~(B) a mediator, other than a senior judge, who is not certified as a mediator but who, in the opinion of the parties and upon review by the presiding judge, is otherwise qualified by training or experience to mediate all or some of the issues in the particular case.~~

(f) Fees. Dependency mediation referrals may be made to a mediator or mediation program that charges a fee. Any order of referral to a mediator or mediation program charging a fee shall advise the parties that they may timely object to mediation on grounds of financial hardship. On the objection of a party or the court's own motion, the court may, after considering the objecting party's ability to pay and any other pertinent information, reduce or eliminate the fee.

(g) Objection to Mediation. Within 10 days of the filing of the order of referral to mediation, any party or participant ordered to mediation may make a written objection to the court about the order of referral if good cause for such objection exists. If a party objects, mediation shall not be conducted until the court rules on the objection.

(h) Scheduling. The mediation conference may be held at any stage of the proceedings. Unless otherwise scheduled by the court, the mediator or the mediation program shall schedule the mediation conference.

(i) Disqualification of the Mediator. Any party may move to enter an order disqualifying a mediator for good cause. If the court rules that a mediator is disqualified from mediating a case, an order shall be entered with the name of a qualified replacement. Nothing in this provision shall preclude mediators from disqualifying themselves or refusing any assignment.

(j) Substitute Mediator. If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a court cannot serve, a substitute mediator can be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator. A mediator shall not mediate a case assigned to another mediator without the agreement of the parties or approval of the court. A substitute mediator shall have the same qualifications as the original mediator.

(k) Discovery. Unless stipulated by the parties or ordered by the court, the mediation process shall not suspend discovery.

(l) Appearances.

(1) Order naming or prohibiting attendance of parties. The court shall enter an order naming the parties and the participants who must appear at the mediation and any parties or participants who are prohibited from attending the mediation. Additional participants may be included by court order or by mutual agreement of all parties.

(2) Physical presence of adult parties and participants. Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties or ordered by the court, any party or participant ordered to mediation shall be physically present at the mediation conference. Persons representing an agency, department, or program must have full authority to enter into an agreement that shall be binding on that agency, department, or program. In the discretion of the mediator, and

with the agreement of the attending parties, dependency mediation may proceed in the absence of any party or participant ordered to mediation.

(3) Appearance of counsel. In the discretion of the mediator, and with the agreement of the attending parties, dependency mediation may proceed in the absence of counsel, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

(4) Appearance of child. The court may prohibit the child from appearing at mediation upon determining that such appearance is not in the best interest of the child. No minor child shall be required to appear at mediation unless the court has previously determined by written order that it is in the child's best interest to be physically present. The court shall specify in the written order of referral to mediation any special protections necessary for the child's appearance.

(5) Sanctions for failure to appear. If a party or participant ordered to mediation fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, the court, on motion of any party or on its own motion, may impose sanctions. Sanctions against the party or participant failing to appear may include one or more of the following: contempt of court, an award of mediator fees, an award of attorney fees, an award of costs, or other remedies as deemed appropriate by the court.

(m) Caucus with Parties and Participants. During the mediation session, the mediator may meet and consult privately with any party, participant, or counsel.

(n) Continuances. The mediator may end the mediation session at any time and may set new times for reconvening the mediation. No further notification shall be required for parties or participants present at the mediation session.

(o) Report on Mediation.

(1) If agreement is reached on all or part of any matter or issue, including legal or factual issues to be determined by the court, the agreement shall be immediately reduced to writing, signed by the attending parties, and promptly submitted to the court by the mediator with copies to all parties and counsel.

(2) If the parties do not reach an agreement as to any matter as a result of mediation, the mediator shall report the lack of an agreement to the court without comment or recommendation.

(p) Court Hearing and Order On Mediated Agreement. On receipt of a full or partial mediation agreement, the court shall hold a hearing and enter an order accepting or rejecting the agreement consistent with the best interest of the child. The court may modify the terms of the agreement with the consent of all parties to the agreement.

(q) Imposition of Sanctions On Breach of Agreement. In the event of any breach or failure to perform under the court-approved agreement, the court, on a motion of any party or on its own motion, may impose sanctions. The sanctions may include contempt of court, vacating the

agreement, imposition of costs and attorney fees, or any other remedy deemed appropriate by the court.

*Committee Notes*

1997 Adoption. In considering the provision regarding the appearance of the child found in subdivision (1)(4), the Committee considered issues concerning the child's right to participate and be heard in mediation and the need to protect the child from participating in proceedings when such participation would not be in the best interest of the child. The Committee has addressed only the issue of mandating participation of the child in mediation. In circumstances where the court has not mandated that the child appear in mediation, the Committee believes that, in the absence of an order prohibiting the child from mediation, the participation of the child in mediation will be determined by the parties. Whenever the court, pursuant to subdivision (p) determines whether to accept, reject, or modify the mediation agreement, the Committee believes that the court shall act in accordance with the confidentiality requirements of chapter 44, Florida Statutes.

## Family Law Rules of Procedure

### Rule 12.741 Mediation Rules

(a) Discovery. Unless stipulated by the parties or ordered by the court, the mediation process shall not suspend discovery.

(b) General Procedures.

- (1) Interim or Emergency Relief. A party may apply to the court for interim or emergency relief at any time. Mediation shall continue while such a motion is pending absent a contrary order of the court, or a decision of the mediator to adjourn pending disposition of the motion. Time for completing mediation shall be tolled during any periods when mediation is interrupted pending resolution of such a motion.
- (2) Sanctions. If a party fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, or knowingly and willfully violates any confidentiality provision under section 44.405, Florida Statutes, the court upon motion shall impose sanctions, including an award of mediator and attorneys' fees and other costs, against the party.
- (3) Adjournments. The mediator may adjourn the mediation conference at any time and may set times for reconvening the adjourned conference. No further notification is required for parties present at the adjourned conference.
- (4) Counsel. Counsel shall be permitted to communicate privately with their clients. The mediator shall at all times be in control of the mediation and the procedures to be followed in the mediation.
- (5) Communication with Parties. The mediator may meet and consult privately with any party or parties or their counsel.
- (6) Appointment of the Mediator.
  - (A) Within 10 days of the order of referral, the parties may agree upon the appointment of a stipulation with the court designating certified mediator:
    - (i) ~~a certified mediator; or~~
    - (ii) ~~a mediator, other than a senior judge, who is not certified as a mediator but who, in the opinion of the parties and upon review by the presiding judge, is otherwise qualified~~

~~by training or experience to mediate all or some of the issues in the particular case.~~

- (B) If the parties cannot agree upon a certified mediator within 10 days of the order of referral, the plaintiff or petitioner shall so notify the court within 10 days of the expiration of the period to agree on a mediator, and the court shall appoint a certified mediator selected by rotation or by such other procedures as may be adopted by administrative order of the chief judge in the circuit in which the action is pending.
- (C) If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a court cannot serve, a substitute mediator can be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator. A mediator shall not mediate a case assigned to another mediator without the agreement of the parties or approval of the court. A substitute mediator shall have the same qualifications as the original mediator.

*Commentary*

1995 Adoption. This rule combines and replaces Florida Rules of Civil Procedure 1.710, 1.720, and 1.730. The rule, as combined, is substantially similar to those three previous rules, with the following exceptions. This rule deletes subdivisions (a) and (b) of rule 1.710 and subdivisions (b) and (c) of rule 1.730. This rule compliments Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.740 by providing direction regarding various procedures to be followed in family law mediation proceedings.