

## **Tips for Successful Mediation**

1. **Know your rights.**

Attend a custody clinic and/or read about North Carolina custody laws before you go to mediation. Consult with a private attorney or Legal Aid attorney.

2. **Compromise.**

Be willing to be reasonable. You will not get everything you want or ask for. Be ready to give in on one thing so that you can focus on getting something else that is more important to you.

3. **Know your “Bottom Line.”**

Decide before you go what are the most important things for you to get and where you are willing to compromise.

4. **Be prepared.**

Think before you go about what you want and write it down. Some things to think about are:

- The number of nights each person will have the child sleep at his/her house (this can affect the amount of child support you can get).
- Will the schedule change in any way during the summer months? What are the “summer months”?
- What time and place will the child be picked up and dropped off for visitation changes?
- Where will the child spend holidays including New Years’ Day, Good Friday, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day?
- Where will the child spend each parent’s birthday, the child’s birthday, Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ Day?
- Who will have the final right to make decisions concerning the child’s medical treatment and education?
- Will this person first have to discuss these decisions with the other parent before making a decision?

5. **Focus forward.**

Control your emotions during the mediation. Look forward, not backwards. Don’t get stuck on your past hurts, frustrations or anger during the mediation. Don’t be distracted by the other person’s bad behavior or insults. Stay focused on the future and be hopeful about reaching an agreement. This may take a lot of work!

6. **Review the Final Agreement carefully before you sign it.**

If you have a "Parenting Plan", be sure it reflects what you agreed to. If you need to make changes, contact the mediator and request the changes.