



MONTGOMERY

C O U N T Y

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

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TO: All Montgomery County Commissioners Employees

FROM: Deborah Feldman, Montgomery County Administrator *DF*
Marcia Knox, Regional Director AFSCME, A.F.L.-C.I.O., Council 8, Local #101 *MK*

DATE: February 9, 2006

SUBJECT: Mediation Services Option

Many times problems in the workplace develop due to our inability to promptly resolve work conflict. Therefore, in order to encourage good communication between all levels of employees, the Montgomery County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), A.F.L.-C.I.O., Council 8, Local #101, have jointly developed a new approach to conflict resolution. The program will be confidential, fair and voluntary, where employees are assisted by a third party neutral in resolving their conflicts. We strongly encourage all staff to support and utilize this crucial, effective and beneficial tool.

Included with this letter are a few questions and answers regarding the new service that we hope will inform you about the process and the benefits that can be derived from your participation and use.

What is mediation?

Mediation is a confidential, fair and voluntary process in which a neutral third person (mediator) assists individuals in resolving their conflicts. The mediator aids the parties in making decisions together, based on an understanding of their own views, the other's views, and the situation they face.

Who can participate in mediation?

Mediation is available to all Montgomery County employees at all levels and can be requested by either party at the first sign of conflict. It is also important to keep in mind that all complaints are not appropriate for mediation. Some employee grievances and discrimination complaints may not be appropriate for mediation if there are issues that involve violence, illegal conduct, or behaviors that violate BCC's policies and procedures.

What are the benefits of mediation?

Mediation is an effective alternative to the more traditional methods used to resolve conflict. Mediation allows both parties to discuss their problems with an objective third party who will not judge them or make decisions for them. This confidential, impartial forum often helps people in conflict preserve important relationships and improve communication.

What about confidentiality?

Mediation communication is confidential to the extent allowed by law. Generally, parties may agree that the mediator will not be called as a witness in any legal proceeding as well as determine they don't want their communication revealed in court. Exceptions to the law concerning what may be confidential and despite what parties may agree to, include signed agreements, threats of bodily injury, plans to commit a crime and complaints of mediator misconduct.

What is a mediator's role?

As an important third party, the mediator assists the disputants in clarifying, discussing, and resolving the issues that created the conflict.

How can a person arrange for or find out more about mediation?

Parties may simply call a Mediation Liaison and make the request. The Mediation Liaison will consult with you about the mediation process, and how it might work in your situation.

Please feel free to contact your supervisor, departmental representative and/or Union Steward regarding the service. You may also contact the Labor and Employee Relations Department at (937) 225-4580 with any questions or concerns as well. Best Wishes for a successful New Year and hope for a more peaceable and productive work environment.