

ALISON VAWTER, ATTORNEY AT LAW

Mediator

Alison Vawter
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MEDIATION -- AN OVERVIEW

You may be reviewing this information because I've been appointed by the Court as your mediator, or because you'd like to look at mediation as a possible way to resolve an issue you have in your family -- custody or visitation of children, division of property or debt, payment of money from one party to the other etc. As a practicing lawyer since 1998, and a mediator and family lawyer since 2001, I handle all of these cases, and I look forward to working with you in mediation.

I will try my hardest to help you resolve your disputed issues that you've been required to or chosen to mediate. Simply put, my job as mediator is to help you reach an agreement that you can live with on the issues that bring you to my office. If, after you read this document and review the forms, you still have questions about the process, I am happy to answer questions. Please keep in mind, however, that I cannot, and will not, provide legal advice, therapy, or counseling to either you or the party with whom you hope to mediate.

In order to familiarize myself with you and your family, as well as the issues involved in this case, the parties (or their attorneys) should forward to me, if they have not already done so, the following information and documentation for receipt **no later than seven days prior to scheduled mediation:**

1. Copies of all relevant petitions and court orders, including any temporary orders, and any subsequent orders addressing the issues that are the subject of the mediation as well as any Orders of Protection. Copies of reports of counselors, DCFS and any child custody evaluations should also be .
2. Copies of all pending pleadings filed by either party addressing the issues that are the subject of the mediation.
3. If you like, you can submit a "position statement," which is essentially written background on the issues you are mediating and where you would like mediation to take you with respect to those issues. The position statement is not necessary. Oftentimes, the issues are pretty well outlined by the pleadings (court documents) in your case. A position statement does tend to help me get an idea of your present position on the disputed issues, though. You can provide a copy of your position statement to the opposing party if you want. However, if you decide not to provide your statement to the opposing party, please let me know

and advise if there is any information in the statement you want me to keep confidential.

Once the mediation process begins, let me know about any developments you believe are important to the mediation process by forwarding information to my address, along with a copy to the opposing party. Please advise me immediately, and in writing with a copy to the opposing party, if you have any reason to suspect that either party poses a threat of harm to the other party or to any child. In addition, please advise me immediately, and in writing with a copy to the opposing party, if you believe there is any reason mediation definitely will not work for your family.

There are two (2) documents that will need to be completed by each of you. The following documents should be e-mailed (to alisonvawter@yahoo.com), mailed, dropped off at my office (if I am not in, you may slide the documents under my door), or faxed to me at 309-837-1910, along with each party's mediation fee of \$300.00 (unless otherwise discussed or ordered by the Court):

1. Mediation Information Form (please fill out completely).
2. Mediation Service Agreement

This mediation session may go longer than three (3) hours if we all agree it should. The mediation session will take place at the Law Office of Alison Vawter, which is located in the Old Bailey House, 100 South Campbell Street, 2nd Floor, Macomb, Illinois, 61455. It is mandatory that both parties be present at the mediation session. No persons other than the parties should accompany the parties to any of the mediation sessions, unless we have all reached an agreement otherwise. Any person who accompanies either party to the mediation session will be asked to leave the building where my office is located prior to the start of mediation and to return only when mediation is completed.

The fee for mediation services will be \$700.00. My hourly rate is \$175.00, so this will cover three (3) hours of my time, as required by the Local Court Rules. The remaining \$175.00 will cover one (1) hour of my time to review the documents submitted by the parties or their counsel prior to the session, and prepare a brief summary of any agreements reached by the parties during the session. Payment is due seven (7) days before our first scheduled session. If further sessions are necessary, or if additional work is requested, the same fees and payment arrangements will apply, and a supplemental retainer must be paid. Any unearned portion of the retainer fee(s) will be refunded.

Finally, as a reminder, the parenting education class required by our local Court Rules should be completed by both parties prior to the first mediation session or as soon after starting mediation as the parent education provider's schedule allows.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide mediation services for you in this matter. I look forward to trying to assist you in resolving the issues that bring you to mediation, and I look forward to meeting you both and hearing about your family.