

**NVMS CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER
AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE MEDIATION**

We, the undersigned, understand and agree to the following:

1. DEFINITION OF MEDIATION: A process in which a neutral (the mediator) assists parties to a conflict in finding a mutually acceptable solution to their dispute.

2. ROLE OF THE MEDIATORS: The mediators will facilitate discussion between the parties by assisting them in communicating, identifying and clarifying issues and exploring potential solutions. The mediators will use a facilitative style of mediation. The parties decide the outcome.

3. ROLE OF THE PARTIES: The parties will participate in good faith, work together and agree to treat each other with respect and courtesy.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY: By this agreement and by statute, the communications made during and in connection with mediation are confidential. The terms of Virginia Code Section 8.01-581.22 are incorporated here:

All memoranda, work products and other materials contained in the case files of a mediator or mediation program are confidential. *Any communication made in or in connection with the mediation, which relates to the issues being mediated, including screening, intake, and scheduling a mediation, whether made to the mediator, mediation program staff, to a party, or to any other person, is confidential.* However, a written mediated agreement signed by the parties shall not be confidential per statute, as the case papers become public record once filed with the court. The Mediator will not provide written assessments, evaluations, or recommendations that relate to the topics mediated to any persons, including the participating parties.

Confidential materials and communications are not subject to disclosure in discovery or in any judicial or administrative proceeding except:

- (i) where all parties to the mediation agree, in writing, to waive the confidentiality;
- (ii) in a subsequent action between the mediator or mediation program and a party to the mediation for damages arising out of the mediation;
- (iii) statements, memoranda, materials and other tangible evidence, otherwise subject to discovery, which were not prepared specifically for use in and actually used in the mediation;
- (iv) where a threat to inflict bodily injury is made;
- (v) where communications are intentionally used to plan, attempt to commit, or commit a crime or conceal an ongoing crime;
- (vi) where an ethics complaint is made against the mediator by a party to the mediation to the extent necessary for the complainant to prove misconduct and the mediator to defend against such complaint;
- (vii) where communications are sought or offered to prove or disprove a complaint of misconduct or malpractice filed against a party's legal representative based on conduct occurring during a mediation;
- (viii) where communications are sought or offered to prove or disprove any of the grounds listed in 8.01-581.26 in a proceeding to vacate a mediated agreement; or
- (ix) as provided by law or rule.

5. MANDATORY REPORTING: According to Virginia Code §63.2-1509, if mediators have reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, they must report the suspected abuse immediately. Therefore, the information about the abuse is not confidential.

6. VOLUNTARY: Mediation is voluntary. The parties or the mediators may decide to stop the mediation at any time for any reason. If there is an order to mediate by a court, the parties are only required to attend an initial orientation session. They may choose at that time whether to continue through the mediation process. No substantive information about the mediation is provided to the court or other referring agency. Either party may choose to end the session if they feel their participation is no longer voluntary.

7. JOINT & SEPARATE SESSIONS: The mediation will generally occur with all parties present. The mediators may also meet separately with each party during the process.

8. LEGAL ADVICE: The mediators do not provide legal advice. Each party to the mediation has the opportunity to consult with independent legal counsel at any time and is encouraged to do so.

9. AGREEMENT: All terms of a settlement are non-binding until they are put into a written agreement *and* signed by all parties. Any signed, mediated agreement may affect the legal rights of the parties. Each party to the mediation should have any draft agreement reviewed by independent counsel prior to signing the agreement.

10. USE OF TECHNOLOGY: Sessions conducted via video conferencing or phone session will also be held to the following:

- **No 3rd parties allowed unless otherwise agreed by all parties.**
- **No eavesdropping on sessions by unauthorized parties.**
- **Use secure Wi-Fi when participating in sessions.**
- **No recording of any component of sessions including audio or documents.**

We, the parties, in order to protect the confidentiality of mediation, understand and agree to the terms presented on pages 1 and 2 of this Agreement to Participate in Online Mediation form provided by The NVMS Conflict Resolution Center.

_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date	_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date
_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date	_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date
_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date	_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date
_____ Participant's Attorney (if present)	_____ Date	_____ Participant's Attorney (if present)	_____ Date
_____ Mediator	_____ Date	_____ Mediator	_____ Date
_____ Other Person Present	_____ Date	_____ Other Person Present	_____ Date