

What are the benefits of using Neutral Evaluation?

- Reduced court-related costs
- Less time spent at court / away from your family
- Expedited case resolution / disposition
- Avoid stress and emotional upheaval
- Less formal and intrusive than litigation
- Everything discussed remains confidential and cannot be used in court should you fail to reach an agreement

Is there a fee for Neutral Evaluation?

A fee of \$400.00 (Parenting issues) or \$800 (financial issues), which is made payable to the Domestic Relations Clerk of Courts, may be waived during the introductory phase or due to financial hardship / indigency.

NOTICE

This pamphlet was created to help you understand your options for dispute resolution but NOT to advise you about the law.

Dedicated to serving the families and children of Medina County



Contact Us

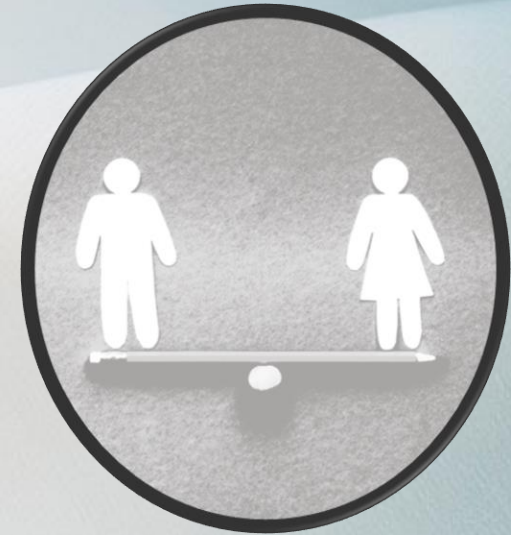
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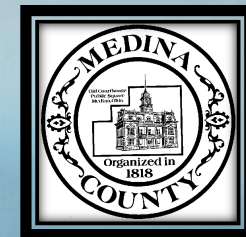


Judge Julie A. Schafer
Medina County
Domestic Relations Court
99 Public Square
Medina, OH 44256

Neutral Evaluation



Medina County Domestic
Relations Court
Family Court Resources



Medina County Domestic Relations Court is pleased to announce the implementation of a new and effective dispute resolution tool – **Neutral Evaluation.**

What is Neutral Evaluation?

Neutral Evaluation (NE) is a short-term confidential process in which parties and counsel, if applicable, participate to explore the strengths and weaknesses of their positions with highly trained and impartial evaluators, who provide feedback to help expedite a resolution.

Why use Neutral Evaluation?

Parents can explore options for settling parenting disputes, and divorcing parties can present their positions related to disentangling their financial matters. The neutral evaluation process explores prospects for settling disagreements, which reduces costs and stress for everyone.

How can I utilize Neutral Evaluation?

The court, upon its own motion or upon the motion of a party, may refer a case to NE. If deemed appropriate, an NE session will be scheduled, and evaluators will be assigned. Each participant must complete and submit a written brief to the Family Court Resources Department and to the other participant or attorney a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the scheduled NE session.

Who are the Evaluators?

For parenting issues, the team will consist of a magistrate and mental health professional. For divorcing parties' financial issues, one magistrate and either a second magistrate or a financial professional and/or attorney will assess. The evaluators are trained mediators with extensive experience addressing parenting disputes.

What happens during the NE session?

- The evaluators will explain the NE process and ground rules.
- Each parent will present his or her case / dispute(s).
- The evaluators may ask questions to gain a complete understanding of the issues and will recess privately to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each party's position.
- The evaluators will provide an assessment of the probable outcome if the matter went to trial.
- Possible settlement will be discussed and the need for further information may be identified.
- Parties may meet privately with their attorneys to discuss options.

What happens after the Neutral Evaluation session?

If the evaluators determine that more information is needed or if they need to speak with the children or other parties, they may schedule another session. NE sessions are anticipated to last 2 – 4 hours.

If the parties reach an agreement, the evaluators will require the agreement to be reduced to writing and submitted to the judge or assigned magistrate. If mediation would be beneficial to address details or to reach a full settlement, it can be scheduled then.

If no agreement is reached, the evaluators will notify the judge or assigned magistrate and recommend the next steps, such as referrals for testing, further assessments, evaluations, or simply to get back on the litigation track. The evaluators will not be permitted to participate any further in the case or to testify during litigation.

