



Family Decision-Making with the Elderly

The good news is, many of us are living longer and healthier lives thanks to the advances of medical science. In addition, our own efforts to do all the “right” things are resulting in opportunities for interesting and productive retirement years. For some, the decision making is being done well ahead of the crisis point, while others may wait until they are under immediate threat either of health or economic problems. Families are now called upon to make decisions with and for their aging parents or relatives, which have become increasingly complicated by geographical, economic and emotional factors.

Mediation is a way to bring all the interested parties together to make decisions collaboratively, and to assign tasks. Even where there are difficult family issues among siblings or others involved, mediation can work to create a safe space for dialogue and gathering of information to help make the best decisions with elderly parents or family members. In mediation the dignity and autonomy of the elder person is preserved as much as possible by their inclusion in the process.

Mediation can be effective in several areas:

- ◆ Adult Guardianship Issues
- ◆ Divorce
- ◆ Grandparent Visitation and Custody
- ◆ Nursing Home Care
- ◆ Health Care
- ◆ Living Situations
- ◆ Financial Issues

Mediation works best when participants are well informed about the resources available. Mediations may include attorneys or other experts. However, once all the relevant information has been gathered, and the experts and resource professionals have been heard, mediation allows the family to make the decisions.

Mediation sessions are normally two hours long. In the event that family members are gathered for a short period of time, additional hours may be scheduled or special arrangements made for immediate follow-up.