



What is Permanency Planning Mediation?

Permanency Planning Mediation (PPM) is a non-adversarial, confidential service provided by a specially trained mediator at the request of the Child Welfare Agency, Parent's Attorney, Adoptive Parent's Attorney, Child's Attorney, Child Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or the Court. It is initiated when it becomes clear that reunification efforts with the family of origin of a particular child or sibling group will not be successful and before the beginning of any court action to terminate parental rights.

The purpose of the mediation is to focus the family of origin and the prospective permanent family on children's need for permanence, as well as to invite their participation in making a permanent plan. One purpose of the mediation process is to minimize loss for children. The PPM process gives participants time to make thoughtful decisions and seek advice and counsel from people they trust. PPM services may be provided in the participants' homes, or other places that everyone agrees are safe and comfortable for the participants.

PPM is a free service provided by Consortium for Children, a private nonprofit that has no connection or fiscal relationship to the Court or the public Child Welfare Agency. PPM initially uses a "caucus model" of mediation (one-on-one meetings) with parties and, if appropriate and all the parties agree, brings everyone together toward the end of the mediation process. Permanency Planning Mediation evolves over a period of 60 – 90 days. Each mediation may take up to 30 hours.

Who Participates in Permanency Planning Mediation?

The primary participants in PPM are the family of origin of a child in the child welfare system and the prospective permanent family (either through Adoption or Legal Guardianship). Mediations may also take place between two adoptive families adopting a sibling group. Other individuals may be invited to attend a mediation session as a support person (such as attorneys, friends, relatives), but only the primary participants may participate. Secondary or support individuals may attend mediation sessions ONLY with the permission of the primary parties. The mediator is always willing to pause the mediation to allow participants to confer with individuals who have attended the mediation to support them.

When is a Referral to Permanency Planning Mediation Made?

A referral to PPM is appropriate when the parents, through contested court action, delay permanence for a child. Referrals may be offered only after court dependency has been established and: 1) Family reunification services are not going to be offered to a family; 2) Family reunification services are going to be terminated and the family is contesting the decision; 3) Termination of parental rights are recommended and the family is contesting the decision; 4) A permanent family has been identified for the child(ren).

Is Participation Mandatory?

Participation by all prospective parties to the mediation is completely voluntary. Potential mediation parties may not be compelled to participate regardless of the referral source.

Is Mediation Confidential?

Mediation offers participants total confidentiality. Under California Law, mediators may not share information disclosed in mediation sessions to anyone, including the Child Welfare Agency or the Court, without the expressed written permission of the mediation parties. Information that is disclosed in the course of mediation may not be entered into an agency record or court hearing.

