



DOMESTIC ABUSE SCREENING POLICY

A Principles to be adopted by the College of Mediators on Domestic Abuse Screening

1. There must be a screening policy for domestic abuse which screening must take place prior to and throughout the mediation process.
2. There must be a policy on violence and abuse in the work place.
3. These policies must be in writing
4. There must be written procedures setting out the requirements for the implementation of these policies.

B Policy on Screening for Domestic Abuse

1. Each participant must make a fully informed and voluntary decision to enter mediation. This requires that each participant is sufficiently informed and has sufficient time to make the decision to attempt mediation after all safety issues have been fully considered.
2. Safety issues must include not only the participants in mediation but also any children and any other significant member of the family of either party.
3. Assessment for Domestic Abuse and/or Child Protection is a continuing requirement which lasts throughout the whole of the mediation process.
4. Implementation of this policy requires a written procedure for safe and effective screening for domestic abuse.

C Definition of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is behavior that seeks to secure power and control for the abuser and the impact of which is to undermine the safety, security self-esteem and autonomy of the abused person. Domestic violence contains elements of the use of any or all of physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal or economic intimidation, oppression or coercion.

The most important factors in domestic abuse are:

- The impact of the behavior as experienced by each/any of the individuals involved.
- That it is viewed from the perspective of the recipient of the abuse/abused person.

D Principles of Screening for Domestic Abuse

- 1.1 Mediators must routinely screen for domestic abuse before a decision is taken to proceed with mediation.
 - 1.2 Screening must take place separately with each participant.
 - 1.3 In reaching a decision about whether to proceed, priority should be given to the individual's perception of abuse over any judgement about levels of severity or types of abuse.
 - 1.4 If in doubt about the appropriateness of mediation the mediator could consult with his/her supervisor and if doubt still remains, must not proceed.
2. Separate screening for domestic abuse must be carried out in circumstances that allow free, frank and safe discussion of the issues of domestic abuse to take place and a fully informed choice to be made by the participants as to whether or not to proceed to mediation.
 3. Mediators must adopt clear, written procedures to screen all clients and to record all decisions about the appropriateness of mediation and termination if domestic abuse or child protection issues have been identified. If mediation is appropriate, procedures to ensure client protection, child protection and mediator safety must be implemented and recorded in writing.
 4. Whether or not domestic abuse emerges as an issue at an initial screening, continued screening must take place throughout mediation and a written record made of all such screening.
 5. In cases where the abused person has made an informed choice to mediate, the mediator's responsibility is to ensure that appropriate arrangements are agreed which so far as possible guarantee that relevant safety issues are addressed and reviewed. Such issues will include for example the exploration of safety matters, implications for children, safe termination, voluntariness and informed consent.
 6. If mediation does not proceed, mediation must be terminated safely, other alternatives to mediation explored, and appropriate advice and referral possibilities should be considered, if possible.