

NORTH COUNTRY CONFLICT RESOLUTION SERVICES  
A Program of the RURAL LAW CENTER OF NEW YORK

## **Elder Mediation Program**

### **The Organization**

North Country Conflict Resolution Services (NCCRS) is a program of the Rural Law Center of New York, Inc. The program is staffed by dispute resolution professionals and certified community volunteers, and is part of the statewide Community Dispute Resolution Centers Program administered by the Unified Court System of the State of New York.

### **Service Area**

The NCCRS dispute resolution centers provide conflict resolution services to residents of northern New York counties. Our services are available in St. Lawrence County, Clinton County, Franklin County, Essex Country and Hamilton County.

### **What is Mediation?**

Mediation is a way in which a trained, impartial person, a mediator, helps people discuss issues and misunderstandings, consider options, and ultimately reach mutually acceptable solutions. In this way, mediators help people communicate clearly and stay on track, but do not make decisions, nor do they give legal advice. Mediation is confidential and voluntary. Mediators are available in every county and are trained under the supervision of the NYS Unified Court System.

### **Who Can Use Mediation Services?**

Mediation services through this program are available to any individual, organization, business or agency concerned with the health, safety, well-being and quality of life of older adults in our communities. Disputes affecting older adults tend to be a mix of legal, health, housing, financial and social issues.

### **Benefits of Mediation**

*Mediation increases the role of older adults in the decisions that impact their quality of life. Specific benefits include:*

- Helps older adults express their emotions, preferences and concerns during decision making
- Improves understanding between older adults and the important people in their lives
- Helps decrease the stress associated with conflict
- Supports collaboration with health care providers to improve quality of care
- Provides an alternative to litigation
- Improves understanding between individuals at risk and the people who care for them.

## **Who are the Mediators?**

Mediators who volunteer their services to NCCRS are members of your own communities and come from a variety of backgrounds. Some bring professional areas of expertise, such as financial, legal, and health care. What they have in common is a strong commitment to resolving conflict in a civil and peaceful manner. All mediators have completed from 25-30 hours of basic training in the principles and skills of mediation. In addition, many go on to complete advanced trainings in specialized areas.

## **Examples of Mediation Issues for Older Adults**

*Older Adults, their families and care providers sometimes experience conflict such as:*

### ***Family Responsibilities***

Siblings disagree over the care requirements of frail and elderly parent

### ***Housing Transitions***

Conflict about moving a loved one to a new setting or the sale of the family home

### ***Safety***

Concerned individuals believe that a neighbor may be an unsafe driver

### ***In-Home Care Givers***

Absent family members concerned that loved one may be taken advantage of by caregivers

### ***Intergenerational Issues***

Tension among parents, children and grandchildren living together

### ***Long-Term Care Concerns***

Resident with a long-term care facility or family object to a change in level of care

### ***Finances***

Conflict regarding financial and estate matters

### ***Healthcare***

Older adult or family disagrees with healthcare provider about medical issues or quality of care

### ***Community Conflict***

Tenant and management disputes, neighbors' noise, vandalism, or differences in lifestyle

## **How Mediation Works**

### ***Scheduling an Appointment***

Anyone may contact our office to request mediation directly or to make a referral.

### ***Where Do Mediations Take Place?***

Sessions may be held in the private conference rooms at our local offices, or at locations convenient to the parties.

### ***How Long Do Mediations Last?***

Mediations are generally scheduled for two-hour time periods. Shorter times or additional sessions can be arranged to suit the needs of the parties.

### ***What will the service cost?***

In our program, nearly all mediation sessions are offered free of charge.

### ***Do I need an attorney?***

Mediators do not provide legal advice. In some situations, such as guardianship, participants may choose to retain a lawyer as a resource for legal information and counsel.

## **How Can I Arrange for Mediation Services?**

Contact the Community Dispute Resolution Center office in your county. Contact information for each of the 5 rural county offices served by the North Country Conflict Resolution Services (St. Lawrence, Clinton, Franklin, Essex and Hamilton) is listed on the main Conflict Resolution page of the Rural Law Center website.