

598.7 Mediation.

1. The district court may, on its own motion or on the motion of any party, order the parties to participate in mediation in any dissolution of marriage action or other domestic relations action. Mediation performed under this section shall comply with the provisions of chapter 679C. The provisions of this section shall not apply if the action involves a child support or medical support obligation enforced by the child support recovery unit. The provisions of this section shall not apply to actions which involve domestic abuse pursuant to chapter 236. The provisions of this section shall not affect a judicial district's or court's authority to order settlement conferences pursuant to rules of civil procedure. The court shall, on application of a party, grant a waiver from any court-ordered mediation under this section if the party demonstrates that a history of domestic abuse exists as specified in section 598.41, subsection 3, paragraph "j".

2. The supreme court shall establish a dispute resolution program in family law cases that includes the opportunities for mediation and settlement conferences. Any judicial district may implement such a dispute resolution program, subject to the rules prescribed by the supreme court.

3. The supreme court shall prescribe rules for the mediation program, including the circumstances under which the district court may order participation in mediation.

4. Any dispute resolution program shall comply with all of the following standards:

a. Participation in mediation shall include attendance at a mediation session with the mediator and the parties to the action, listening to the mediator's explanation of the mediation process, presentation of one party's view of the case, and listening to the response of the other party. Participation in mediation does not require that the parties reach an agreement.

b. The parties may choose the mediator, or the court shall appoint a mediator. A court-appointed mediator shall meet the qualifications established by the supreme court.

c. Parties to the mediation have the right to advice and presence of counsel at all times.

d. The parties to the mediation shall present any agreement reached through the mediation to their attorneys, if any. A mediation agreement reached by the parties shall not be enforceable until approved by the court.

e. The costs of mediation shall be borne by the parties, as agreed to by the parties, or as ordered by the court, and may be taxed as court costs. Mediation shall be provided on a sliding fee scale for parties who are determined to be indigent pursuant to section 815.9.

5. The supreme court shall prescribe qualifications for mediators under this section. The qualifications shall include but are not limited to the ethical standards to be observed by mediators. The qualifications shall not include a requirement that the mediator be licensed to practice any particular profession.

[C51, § 1481; R60, § 2533; C73, § 2222; C97, § 3173; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, § **10471**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, § 598.4; C71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, § 598.7]

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