



# Social Justice Mediation Program

The **Vital Village Network (VVN)** is a community-engagement network of residents and organizations committed to maximizing child, family, and community well-being.

The **Social Justice Mediation Program (SJMP)** aims to reduce conflict and create trauma-sensitive environments that support the greater VVN mission through providing free, community-based mediation services. Our mediators aim to make each person feel heard, their perspectives valued, and to increase understanding for all community members involved.

Website: [bit.ly/vvnsjmp](http://bit.ly/vvnsjmp)

Online Request Form: [bit.ly/vvnsjemprequest](http://bit.ly/vvnsjemprequest)

Contact us: [vnmediators@gmail.com](mailto:vnmediators@gmail.com)

---

## Choosing Mediation

Are you experiencing tensions with a parent/guardian or school administrator? Are you dealing with an unresolved conflict with a teacher or co-worker in education? The process of mediation may allow you both to understand your differences, resolve your conflict and move forward with greater resiliency.

## How It Works

1. **Contact us:** Speak with one of our Program Directors to share about yourself and your situation, learn more about the VVN Social Justice Mediation Program and see if the process of mediation will best serve you.
2. **Communication:** A Program Director will contact all people involved in the conflict. Mediation is a completely voluntary process so everyone must be on board in order to move forward.
3. **Scheduling mediation sessions:** The goal is to schedule 3 initial mediation sessions per disputant that can take place either in person or in an alternative way (e.g. phone).
4. **Mediation process:** Our mediators meet with each person individually in order to hear from each person in a space where they can speak freely. After hearing from each person, mediators interface with the other person in an effort to work towards greater understanding of the conflict. Mediators may meet with each person individually a few or more times. The process continues until those involved have reached an outcome that they designed themselves and find acceptable. Our goal is to help you reach agreement or, if you decide not to, to help you consider what next steps will be meaningful and empowering for you. Mediators honor if

participants do not wish to share any particular information with the other person. Mediators will provide confidentiality unless required by law or if there is a risk of harm to one's self or another. Detailed information about confidentiality will be provided at the mediation and you are welcome to ask more about that in advance.

- 5. Greater understanding:** The goal of our model of mediation is to reach greater understanding on both sides. We believe that many conflicts come from the breakdown of effective communication. Our goal is to hear and pay attention to underlying stories within a conflict and to navigate towards a place of understanding, supporting each person to make their own decisions about the outcome.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who are the mediators?

Our team of community mediators are social workers, teachers, activists, parents and everything in between. We are committed to community health and well-being. All mediators are trained by Leah Wing and Deepika Marya via the Social Justice Mediation Institute. Learn more at [www.sjmediation.org](http://www.sjmediation.org).

### How long is the process?

Our process is designed around you, aiming to take a holistic approach to understand the situation at hand. Participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. Most mediations take place over the course of several weeks.

### Do we always reach an agreement?

No. The goal of mediation is to foster communication between both parties, working toward greater understanding on both sides. In some cases, this may lead to an agreement, but the mediators will not pressure anyone into one.

### Is the agreement binding?

When writing an agreement, you may agree on terms. However, the mediators will not enforce these terms.

### Is it confidential?

The mediators will maintain confidentiality with the exception of risk of harm to self or others.