



PREPARING FOR MEDIATION

Going through a divorce is challenging, and preparing for mediation can help streamline the process, reduce stress, and lead to more productive discussions. Mediation offers a collaborative approach to resolving issues, and being well-prepared can significantly enhance its effectiveness. Here's a checklist that will help give you an idea of how you can be most prepared for your mediation session:

1. Financial Documents

Gather all relevant financial documents to provide a clear picture of your assets, liabilities, income, and expenses. These documents are important for fair discussions on property division, alimony, and child support:

- **Income Statements:**
 - Pay stubs, W4 Withholdings information, tax returns (last three years), W-2 forms, 1099 forms.
- **Bank Statements:**
 - Checking, savings, and investment accounts (last six months).
- **Debt Information:**
 - Credit card statements, mortgage statements, car loans, student loans, personal loans.
- **Property Information:**
 - Deeds, mortgage documents, property tax statements, home appraisal reports.
- **Retirement Accounts:**
 - Statements for IRAs, 401(k)s, pensions, and other retirement accounts.
- **Business Documents:**
 - If self-employed, gather business financial statements, tax returns, profit and loss statements.
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2. Documentation / Notes on Living Expenses

Documenting your monthly living expenses helps in discussions about spousal support and budgeting post-divorce. This includes preparing information on:

- **Housing Costs:**
 - Rent/mortgage payments, utilities, property taxes, insurance.
- **Daily Living Expenses:**
 - Groceries, transportation, medical expenses, childcare, entertainment, clothing.
- **Insurance Policies:**
 - Health, life, auto, homeowner's/renter's insurance policies and premiums

3. List of Assets and Valuables

Compile a list of all assets and valuables to ensure a fair division. This can include:

- **Real Estate:**
 - Primary residence, vacation homes, rental properties, land.



- **Vehicles:**
 - Cars, boats, motorcycles, RVs, including titles and loan documents.
- **Personal Property:**
 - Furniture, jewelry, artwork, collectibles, electronics.
- **Financial Assets:**
 - Stocks, bonds, mutual funds, savings accounts, life insurance policies with cash value

4. Applicable Legal Documentation

Collect relevant legal documents that may impact the mediation process. This can include:

- **Prenuptial or Postnuptial Agreements:**
 - If applicable, bring copies of these agreements.
- **Previous Court Orders:**
 - Any existing orders related to child custody, support, or other relevant matters.
- **Estate Planning Documents:**
 - Wills, trusts, power of attorney, and other estate planning documents.

5. List of Personal Goals and Priorities

Clearly defining your goals and priorities helps keep discussions focused and productive. This can include defining:

- **Custody and Parenting Plans:**
 - Outline your preferences for child custody arrangements, visitation schedules, and parenting plans.
- **Financial Goals:**
 - Determine your goals for asset division, spousal support, and child support.
- **Future Needs:**
 - Consider your future housing needs, career plans, and any education or training required for your post-divorce life..

6. Emotional Preparation

Emotional readiness is just as important as practical preparation. This can include:

- **Mental Health Support:**
 - Consider speaking with a counselor to help manage the emotional aspects of divorce.
- **Open Mindset:**
 - Approach mediation with an open mind, ready to negotiate, compromise, and move forward in establishing peace for everyone
- **Patience and Realism:**
 - Understand that it is possible that mediation may require multiple sessions to help ease into discussions and take breaks after emotional conversations