



Elder Mediation: A Community Resource

By Andrea Vallee

When communication is difficult and critical decisions are put on hold, families may need a neutral third party to help get them “unstuck” in their decision making. Elder mediation is one solution to help families address major life transitions of the elderly and provides a forum for family centered decision-making. Mediation is a voluntary and non-adversarial process designed to resolve conflict. The process creates the opportunity for all parties to benefit by the outcome, rather than having a “winner” and a “loser.” Mediators act as neutral facilitators to assist families in resolving conflicts, clarifying issues and developing mutually acceptable agreements to best meet their needs and interests.

Family issues that are appropriate for Elder Mediation include residence decisions, distribution of care giving responsibilities, safety and health concerns, wills and estates, and major life transitions that can result in painful and unrelenting conflict.

Like all mediation practices, elder mediation is private, confidential and completely voluntary. Mediation sessions can take place in senior living facilities if needed. Elder mediation is a cooperative rather than adversarial process, so families are often able to repair their strained relationships. Because family members develop their own solutions, the satisfaction with the outcome is high and the resolutions tend to be workable and long lasting.

The goals of elder mediation are to allow families to create workable and mutually acceptable solutions

to their difficult and often emotional disputes, and to develop communication strategies to enable families to successfully work together to make important decisions in the future. By participating in the mediation process, family members are able to control the outcome of their meeting. All family members, including elders, have an opportunity to be heard.

Mediators are skilled conflict resolution experts trained to listen actively, remain neutral, identify and separate issues, understand and redress power imbalances and identify when expert outside information is needed. Elder mediation sessions

often involve not just the family members, but appropriate allied professionals such as lawyers, geriatric care managers, healthcare providers, and financial planners.

Ideally, early intervention is the best approach to resolving family conflicts involving elder care and estate issues, before the family is in crisis

and entrenched in conflict. When issues are avoided, disagreed upon, and ignored, they can result in fewer choices, financial loss, and emotional turmoil for the family. Working through these challenges in the mediation process can be an opportunity to preserve financial and familial well being.

Andrea Vallee is the director of Mediation and Facilitation Services at the Dispute Resolution Center of Skagit County.

The Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program continues to provide elder care mediation to the community. Contact us at 425-452-4091.



GERIATRIC CARE MANAGEMENT

by Jullie Gray, MSW, LICSW, GMHS, CMC, CPG

Geriatric care managers are a relatively new breed of professionals. Experts in aging, we guide families who are struggling with problems associated with growing older. At the core of every care manager's skills is the ability to create innovative solutions to complicated problems.

Care managers can efficiently take the helm and plot a course for families through a variety of confusing systems, such as fragmented healthcare services, residential care programs and ever-changing entitlement benefits like Medicare.

Navigating healthcare and aging services has become very difficult. Older adults and families often find themselves under pressure, floundering in the dark, and seniors aren't sure of how to find the resources they badly need. Family members often have to make decisions for their parents quickly, without time to research the best options and without agreement about the best course of action. Seniors can be whisked through the healthcare system at such lightening speed they become confused about what they are supposed to do next. Because things happen so quickly, family members are often left in the dark, yet are expected to make major decisions for their parent, set follow-up care into motion, and keep juggling job, children and life in general. Overwhelmed with mounting pressure, frustrations can easily build and hostility between family members can come boiling out. This is where mediation can help.

The care manager may become a third party neutral -- however the care manager's role is to assess the situation and make recommendations. In tense family disputes, a mediator, who is not obliged to give professional assessments and substantive recommendations, may be a more appropriate for maintaining neutrality throughout the family discussions. Mediators can also bring care managers into the process for expert advice. For example a parent and her three children may be mediating the issues of where the mother should live. Part of the mediated agreement may be to hire a geriatric care manager for recommendations about how to best support mom, whether it be at home or in a supportive living environment. A care manager can also help connect families to caregiver support groups, respite care or other vital community services.

You might contact a geriatric care manager about a specific question or problem: *"Is it still safe for dad to live at home alone and continue driving?"* Or, you may call because of a full-blown crisis: *"Mom doesn't think she needs any help but she nearly burned down the house when she left the stove on."*

Care managers provide a wide array of services including: completing comprehensive assessments; developing care plans; facilitating family conferences; coordinating care for the older or disabled person; advocacy, bill paying, counseling, guardianship, ongoing monitoring, placement, power of attorney services and family education. Whatever the issue, care managers are trained to help.

Jullie Gray is a healthcare and aging expert with over 25 years of experience in the field. She owns Northwest Senior Services, a geriatric care management and consulting firm. Jullie will be a member of the panel for the Elder Mediation In-Service Training on Sept. 9.

ELDER CARE: A Case Study

by Phyllis Sandel

Phyllis is one of our volunteers, who has had both personal and professional experience with adult care and long-term care facilities over the years. This example is a good representation of her experience:

Aunt Clara, your 89 year old great-aunt, is in a long term care facility near your home. As her only local relative, you visit frequently to cheer her up and keep tabs on how she is faring. Although she is hard of hearing, she is in fair health and speaks clearly. Aunt Clara is upset because she cannot find her cardigan and reports that the "Mexican nurse" told her she "turned it in to the office." You speak with the "nurse," who is actually an aide from Haiti named Chanté. She does not remember that conversation and has difficulty understanding your question about a cardigan. She does not know that word "cardigan" and needs a picture to be drawn to understand.

When asked about the lost item, the charge nurse hands you a form to complete and turn into the office. Two weeks later, Aunt Clara is still upset, the cardigan is still missing, Chanté is hostile because your aunt is accusing her of theft, and the charge nurse thinks Aunt Clara is just forgetful.

This is not an uncommon dilemma when the majority of bedside care is delivered by multi-cultural staff, many with very limited English, and patients are often forgetful or early stages of dementia, and may have diminished sight and hearing.

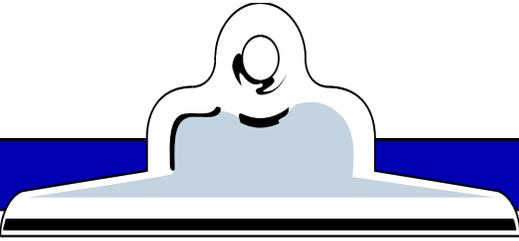
If Aunt Clara is to be comfortable in this facility, the issue needs to be resolved. You, the aide and the management need clarification of what really happened and the communication barriers need to be addressed. Mediation would be helpful for all parties concerned.

Elder Mediation In-Service Training

Please join us on **Tuesday, September 9** from **6:00 to 8:00 pm** in room 1E-112 at Bellevue City Hall (6:00 refreshments; 6:30-8:00 program) for our next Mediation In-Service Training on **Elder Mediation** with a panel of experts from the elder care community including Craig Coombs, Elder Law Attorney; John Stilz and Jack Mahler, King County Long Term Care Ombudsman Program; and Jullie Gray, owner of Northwest Senior Services. They will discuss the role of mediation in elder care to help us apply mediation skills when working with the elderly and their families, caregivers and facilities. Join us for this informative and stimulating in-service training!

RSVP to 425-452-4091 or

mediation_info@bellevuewa.gov



Parent—Teen Update

By
Cathy Goldman

I am excited to begin a new school year. I truly have a wonderful group of mediators to draw from for the parent-teen mediation program. The summer was quiet, with only a few cases. I anticipate more cases once school begins. Many of you are anxious to observe cases and I will continue to e mail those opportunities to you.



In the meantime, we have some exciting events this fall. On September 17th from 6 to 8 pm I will meet with the newly trained mediators to talk about "The Intake Process." We will meet in room 121. On September 23rd, 6 to 8 pm, we have a powerful presentation by Stephanie Bell and Ann McBroom from the King County ADR program. The topic is "Improving Your Co-Mediation Experience through Improv." Everyone is welcome to attend this training.

I hope you all had a wonderful summer! It will be great to gather together once again to launch another year of helping families in conflict.

BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

Neighborhood In-Services:

Elder Mediation: Craig Coombs,
Jack Mahler, John Stilz, and Jullie Gray
Tues. Sept. 9th, from 6-8:00 PM in Room 1E-112
6:00 refreshments, 6:30-8:00 program

Conflict Personalities in Mediation

Pam Wyss, King County EAP Coordinator
Wed. Oct. 15th, from 6-8 PM in Room 1E-121

Parent-Teen In-Services with Cathy Goldman:

Nuts & Bolts of the Intake Process

Wed. Sept 17th, from 6-8 PM Room 1E-121

Family Night: An Orientation to Mediation

Thurs. Oct. 2nd, from 7-9 PM Room 1E-120

Becca Bill and Beyond

Tues. Oct. 7th, from 6-8 PM Room 1E-112

Joint Neighborhood Parent-Teen In-Services:

Improving your Co-mediation

Experience through Improv

Stephanie Bell and Ann McBroom

Tues. Sept 23rd, from 6-8 PM Room 1E-112

Cross Cultural Issues

Wed. Nov. 12th, from 6-8:00 PM Room 1E-121

Book Group:

Wednesday, September 10 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. We will be reading Dan Ariely's book *Predictably Irrational*.

Con/Med Consultation Group:

Join us to discuss your current conciliations/mediations or questions. Great networking and learning opportunity. Open to all volunteers.
Wed. Sept. 24th at 5:30 in Room 1E-118.

Program Staff:

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897
Parent-Teen Coordinator:	Cathy Goldman	-	452-4091

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

Volunteer Profile:

Debra Pinckney



I am a Bellevue resident living with my family in Clyde Hill for the past 17 years. I joined the Bellevue conciliation team after reading about it in the Bellevue Reporter and attending the mediation training. My lifelong interests include human interaction, civic pride and giving back to the community. As a former active member of the Junior League of Seattle (an organization dedicated to training women volunteer leaders) I learned the benefit of training and coaching individuals to improve performance both individually and in teams. The Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program has ideals that I whole-heartedly agree with -- developing good communication skills among neighbors, encouraging good neighbor relations, and promoting positive interactions for people living, working, shopping and visiting in the City of Bellevue. As we grow as a city it is more important than ever to define and develop our character as a **nice** place to live and visit.



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