

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
OFFICE OF THE FAMILY LAW FACILITATOR

1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
805.882.4667

312 E. Cook Street, Bldg. E,  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor,  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
805.614.6442

**Scheduling and/or canceling a mediation appointment with Family Court Services**

**Background information.** The court encourages the use of mediation to settle disputes. Mediated solutions to problems can reduce conflict between people. The court therefore requires parents to participate in mediation with Family Court Services before they are allowed to have a hearing before a judge or commissioner regarding custody and/or visitation issues. (Local Rule 1501 *et seq.*) The mediation session must occur close in time before the court hearing. If several months or longer separate the mediation and the scheduled hearing or if the issues in conflict have significantly changed since the mediation session, then the court may require the parents to go back to mediation to try again to reach a resolution.

**Procedure to set a mediation appointment.**

1. You **must have an existing family law court case** with the Santa Barbara County Superior Court. The types of acceptable court cases include divorce, legal separation, annulment, parentage, and child support enforcement cases (with the Dept. of Child Support Services), restraining order case or an action for custody and support of minor children. If you don't yet have a case filed with this court, contact the Office of the Family Law Facilitator for help.
2. **Contact the other parent and talk with him or her regarding a mutually-acceptable date** for a mediation appointment. Appointments are generally available approximately a month after the date of setting. Appointments are generally set Monday – Friday at either 8:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. A Spanish-speaking mediator is available upon request. Also, separate rooms are available for the mediation session in cases with a history of domestic violence. Please tell the secretary at the time of setting the appointment if you have a preferred day or time slot.
3. Contact the appropriate office of Family Court Services and **set the appointment**.
  - a. If you have a court case in the **Anacapa Division (South County)** of the court, call **805.882.4667** or go to 1100 Anacapa Street, First Floor, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.
  - b. If you have a court case in the **Lompoc or Cook Divisions (North County)** of the court, call **805.614.6429** or go to 312 East Cook Street, Building E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Santa Maria, CA 93454.
4. Within 3 court days of making the appointment, the parent setting the appointment must **serve and file a Notice of Mediation with Family Custody Services form (local form SC-4018)**. All local forms are available at [www.sbcourts.org](http://www.sbcourts.org) under "local forms," "family law."

**Procedure to cancel a mediation appointment.**

1. **If both parents want to reschedule** the mediation appointment, the parent who set the original appointment can **contact the Family Court Services** office and set a new date that is mutually acceptable to both parents. That parent must also prepare a new Notice of Mediation with Family Court Services (local form SC-4018).

2. **If one parent is unable or unwilling to attend the scheduled mediation, then that parent needs to file and serve the Notice of Cancellation form (local form SC-4017).** This must be done within 2 calendar days of the receipt of the Notice of Mediation. The parent must also cancel the mediation appointment with the Secretary no less than 7 days before the mediation appointment.

**Failure to attend the scheduled mediation.** The failure to attend mediation **without a good reason** makes the parent subject to **possible sanctions** by the court at its discretion.

**Disputes regarding attendance and cancellation.** If there is a disagreement between the parents regarding attendance at, cancellation of, scheduling or rescheduling of a mediation appointment, then **either parent can file the Request for Case Management form (local form SC-4014).** This will set a date for hearing by the assigned judicial officer.

**NOTE:**

- **The staff of Family Court Services is not authorized or permitted to referee any mediation scheduling disputes between the parents.**
- **Santa Barbara County Superior Court Local Rules 1501 *et seq.* can be found at [www.sbcourts.org](http://www.sbcourts.org), then look under “local rules,” or go to your local Law Library, 1100 Anacapa Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 or 312 East Cook Street, Santa Maria, CA 93454.**