



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION INFORMATION PACKAGE

Recognizing that many civil disputes can be resolved without the time and expense of traditional civil litigation, the Superior Court of California, strongly encourages parties in civil cases to explore and pursue the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

What is Alternative Dispute Resolution?

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is the general term applied to a wide variety of dispute resolution processes which are alternatives to lawsuits. Types of ADR processes include:

- Arbitration
- Mediation
- Settlement Conferences
- Private judging
- Neutral evaluation
- Mini-trials
- Negotiation and *hybrids* of these processes

All ADR processes offer a partial or complete alternative to traditional court litigation for resolving disputes. At the present time, the Superior Court offers Mediation and Arbitration.

What are the advantages of using ADR?

ADR can have a number of advantages over traditional court litigation.

- * **ADR can save time.** Even in a complex case, a dispute can be resolved through ADR in a matter of months or weeks, while a lawsuit can take years.
- * **ADR can save money.** By producing earlier settlements, ADR can save parties and courts money that might otherwise be spent on litigation costs (attorneys fees and court expenses.)
- * **ADR provides more participation.** Parties have more opportunity with ADR to express their own interests and concerns, while litigation focuses exclusively on the parties' legal rights and responsibilities.
- * **ADR provides more control and flexibility.** Parties can choose the ADR process most appropriate for their particular situation and that will best serve their particular needs.
- * **ADR can reduce stress and provide greater satisfaction.** ADR encourages cooperation and communication, while discouraging the adversarial atmosphere found in litigation. Surveys of disputants who have gone through ADR have found that satisfaction with ADR is generally high, especially among those with extensive ADR experience.

Arbitration and Mediation

Although there are many different types of ADR processes, the types most commonly used to resolve disputes in California state courts are Arbitration and Mediation. The Superior Court currently offers pre-screened panelists with experience and training in each of the following areas.

Arbitration. An Arbitrator hears evidence presented by the parties, makes legal rulings, determines facts and makes an Arbitration award. Arbitration awards may be entered as judgments in accordance with the agreement of the parties or, where there is no agreement, in accordance with California statutes. Arbitration can be binding if the parties so agree in writing. If there is no such agreement, either party can reject the Arbitration award and request a trial.



Mediation. Mediation is a voluntary, informal, confidential process in which the Mediator, a neutral third party, facilitates settlement negotiations. The Mediator improves communication by and among the parties, helps parties clarify facts, identify legal issues, explore options and arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution of the dispute.

Litigants are encouraged to use an ADR process as early in the case as circumstances permit. All appropriate cases will be reviewed for referral to ADR at the Case Management Conference(CMC).

ADR Procedures for the Superior Court

Upon filing a complaint or cross-complaint, the plaintiff/cross-complainant must acquire this information package from the Court's Website, or the Superior Court Clerk. Plaintiff is required to include the ADR Information Package when he or she serves the Complaint on the Defendant.

The court's ADR Panel List is available on-line may be obtained at the Civil Filing Counter.

Mediation.

All parties to the dispute may voluntarily agree to submit the case to a neutral Mediator, either through a court-appointment or through a private arrangement. The parties may choose either of the following Mediation choices:

Private Mediation. Parties to a civil action agree to mediate their dispute with a Mediator of their choice without court assistance. The cost of Mediation must be borne by the parties equally unless the parties agree otherwise. Parties will be charged an amount as set by the Mediator (refer to the ADR Panel List for current rates).

Court Mediation. Upon stipulation of the parties, a Mediator and alternate Mediator will be selected from the court-approved list of neutrals (ADR Panel List). The court will confirm the selected Mediator and notice parties by mail.

The Mediator is then responsible for contacting the parties to confirm a date, time, and place for Mediation. Mediators on the court's approved ADR Panel List have agreed to provide up to three (3) hours of pro-bono Mediation. In the event the Mediation extends beyond 3 hours and parties determine it would be beneficial to continue the Mediation process; the parties will independently be responsible for compensating the Mediator in an amount as set by the Mediator.

UNLIMITED CIVIL CASES

- A *Stipulation and Order to Mediation – Unlimited Civil Cases*, Form CVE-MED-179 (*see attached*) may be filed with the court at any time up to 15 calendar days prior to the Case Management Conference.
- If the parties do not stipulate to Mediation prior to their CMC, they may indicate their willingness to stipulate to Mediation at the CMC. In that event, parties must submit a *Stipulation and Order to Mediation – Unlimited Civil Cases* within 14 calendar days after their CMC.
- A *Mediation Statement* must be filed with the *Case Management Statement*.

LIMITED CIVIL CASES

- Parties may select and conduct voluntary Private Mediation without notification to the Court.
- Parties may stipulate to court mediation by filing a *Stipulation and Order to Arbitration/Mediation - Limited Civil Cases* form (CVE-203) at any time after the filing of the *Limited Civil Case Status Memorandum* form (CVE-202). This form is located on the court's website A *Stipulation and Order to Arbitration/Mediation – Limited Civil Cases* MUST be filed concurrently or subsequent to a *Limited Civil Case Status Memorandum*.



Arbitration

UNLIMITED CIVIL CASES

- Plaintiff may elect, the parties may stipulate, or the judge may Order the case to Arbitration. Parties will be asked to select an Arbitrator and three alternate Arbitrators from the court's ADR Panel List. The court will send a Notice of Appointment and an appropriate Order to Arbitration to all parties.
- Arbitrations are conducted pursuant to California Rules of Court, rules 3.810 through 3.830, and Local Rules Chapter 2, Part 5. Unless otherwise stipulated, an Award of Arbitrator is not binding upon the parties provided that they file a timely Request for Trial De Novo pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.826. Upon the filing of a timely Request for Trial De Novo, the case will proceed to a Trial-Setting Conference. If no timely Request for Trial De Novo is filed, judgment based upon the Award of Arbitrator will be entered pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.827.

LIMITED CIVIL CASES

Arbitration may occur in a limited civil case under the following circumstances:

- When all parties stipulate to arbitration pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 1141.12. A stipulation for arbitration shall be filed using the Court's local form, Stipulation and Order to Arbitration/Mediation – Limited Civil Cases form (CVÆ-203). A Stipulation and Order to Arbitration/Mediation – Limited Civil Cases MUST be filed concurrently or subsequent to a Limited Civil Case Status Memorandum form (CVÆ-202).
- When plaintiff elects to refer the case to judicial arbitration. A written election by the plaintiff to submit an action or proceeding to arbitration shall be filed using the Court's local form, Limited Civil Case Status Memorandum form (CVÆ-202).

Additional Information

For additional information regarding the Court's ADR program, please go to the Court's website.