



**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF STANISLAUS**

NOTICE TO SMALL CLAIMS LITIGANTS

The Superior Court of California, County of Stanislaus – Small Claims Division provides mediation services to litigants. Participation in mediation is voluntary.

There is **no charge** for participating in mediation.

Mediation - VOLUNTARY:

While participation in the Court's mediation program is not required, the Court strongly encourages parties to participate in mediation.

What is mediation?

In mediation, a neutral and impartial person called a "mediator" helps both sides communicate and try to reach a solution to their dispute that is acceptable to both of them. The mediator does not make any decisions about the dispute. They just help both sides talk through the issues so the parties can settle the dispute themselves. Mediation leaves the control of the outcome to the parties in the case.

When can I go to mediation?

- Mediation is available to try **before your court date** and it is *strongly urged* that you do so, because if your case is resolved prior to the court date, you may be able to avoid having to appear in court all together.
- Mediation is also available on the **day of your trial**.

If you choose to try mediation *before* your trial, you can contact the Court's mediator services provider:

Stanislaus County Mediation Center (A program of Project Sentinel, Inc.)
(209) 236-1577 or visit www.stanislausmediation.org

Mediation proceedings are confidential and conducted in private. Mediations conducted prior to your hearing or trial can be conveniently scheduled at any time during the day, some early evenings, and on limited weekends.

How does mediation work on the day of the trial?

In person mediation services are also available on site at the Stanislaus Courthouse on the day of your trial. Both the plaintiff(s) and the defendant(s) must agree to participate in the process. A mediator from the program will meet with the parties involved in the case.

If your case is resolved through mediation on the day of your trial, all of the parties will sign a document that outlines the terms of the agreement. If you are not able to resolve your case through mediation on the day of trial, you will go back into the courtroom and a judicial officer will hear your case. Mediation will not delay your opportunity for a trial. The Court, of course, hopes that the mediation will resolve the dispute and eliminate the need for court action.

What are the benefits of mediation?

Mediation gives the parties more control over the case and the outcome. The parties are able to participate more actively in creating a workable solution than if they go to court and leave the decision up to a judge. Also, they can create solutions that go beyond what the court can do but that better address their particular situation and dispute.