Superior Court of California
County of Ventura

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) INFORMATION

ADR Introduction

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes help people resolve disputes without a trial. The Court strongly encourages the parties to evaluate and engage in ADR before trial, and it may be beneficial to do so early in the case before significant legal fees and costs are incurred.

Below, please find some information about the potential advantages and disadvantages of ADR, the most common types of ADR, and how to find a local ADR program or neutral. You can read more information about these ADR processes and watch videos that demonstrate them at www.courts.ca.gov/programs-initiatives/alternative-dispute-resolution-adr.

Potential Advantages of ADR

- Saves time
- Saves money
- Gives parties more control over the litigation and the outcome of the case
- Preserves or improves relationships

Potential Disadvantages of ADR

- May occur before full discovery conducted
- May be ineffective if one party is non-cooperative

Most Common Types of ADR

1. **Mediation –** A neutral person, called a "mediator" helps the parties communicate in an effective and constructive manner so they can try to settle their dispute. The mediator does not decide the outcome, but helps the parties reach a resolution. Mediation is usually confidential and may be useful when parties want to maintain an ongoing relationship, such as in disputes between family members, neighbors, co-workers, or business partners.

2. **Arbitration –** The parties present evidence and arguments to a neutral person, called an "arbitrator" who then decides the outcome of the dispute. Arbitration is less formal than a trial, and the rules of evidence are usually relaxed. If the parties agree to binding arbitration, they waive their right to a court trial and agree to accept the arbitrator's decision as final. With nonbinding arbitration, any party may reject the arbitrator's decision and request a court trial. Arbitration may be appropriate when the parties want someone else to decide the outcome of their dispute but would wish to avoid the formality, time, and expense of a trial, or want an expert in the subject matter of the dispute to make a decision.

3. **Settlement Conferences –** A judge or another neutral person called a "settlement officer" helps the parties to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their case and facilitates discussions about settlement. The judge or settlement officer does not make a decision in the case but helps the parties negotiate a resolution.

Local ADR Programs for Civil Cases

Court-Ordered Civil Mediation Program (Local Rule 3.24) Information Sheet

The Ventura Superior Court-Ordered Civil Mediation Program helps litigants resolve disputes early, offering a quick, cost-effective, and less stressful alternative to trial. Litigants can settle their cases through in-person or Zoom sessions with a professional mediator. Civil cases involving disputes $50,000 or less per plaintiff may be ordered to mediation. Litigants can also voluntarily participate in this mediation program with court approval, regardless of the case amount. Court-approved mediators offer three (3) hours of free mediation. If needed, parties can continue mediation for a fee.

To learn more about the Court-Ordered Civil Mediation Program please contact the Civil Mediation Coordinator at VenturaCivilMediation@ventura.courts.ca.gov or 800 South Victoria Avenue, Ventura, California 93009. Materials are available on the Court's website at www.ventura.courts.ca.gov/civil.html.

Mediation Funded by the Dispute Resolution Programs Act (DRPA). Ventura County has two organizations that offer mediation assistance for qualified applicants. You can find out more about these programs using the contact information below.

Conflict Resolution Institute 4475 Market Street, Suite C Ventura, CA 93003 805-384-1313 www.conflictresolutionvc.org	Ventura County District Attorney's Consumer Mediation Unit 805-654-3110 www.vcdistrictattorney.com/divisions/special-prosecutions/#consumermediation

Private ADR. To find a private ADR program or neutral, search online, in your local directory, or legal newspaper for dispute resolution, mediation, settlement, or arbitration services.

Legal Representation and Advice

To participate effectively in ADR, it is important to understand your legal rights, responsibilities and possible trial outcomes. ADR neutrals cannot provide legal representation or advice.

If you need an attorney, contact the California State Bar at www.calbar.ca.gov or the Ventura County Bar Association at www.vcba.org or 805-650-7599.

For information on free or low-cost legal assistance, visit the California Courts website at www.selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/getting-legal-help.