

## ACR Approved Family Mediation Training Program Guidelines

*Approved by the ACR Family Section*

- [15 Identified Training Outcomes](#)
- [General Guidelines for Training Approval](#)
- [Applicant's qualifications to offer training](#)
- [The Student Manual](#)
- [Design of the program](#)

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### **15 Identified Training Outcomes**

Mediation Training Programs approved by the ACR Family Section should ensure that participants can demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:

1. Ability to explain what mediation is (within the dispute resolution context) and what a mediator does;
2. Awareness of theories and current research and literature underlying conflict and its resolution, and their application to family mediation;
3. Ability to contract for mediation services;
4. Ability to screen for appropriateness of mediation, including knowledge and ability to screen for domestic violence and an awareness of appropriate responses when domestic violence or its potential has been identified;
5. Ability to assist the parties in surfacing and framing the topics to be discussed in mediation;
6. \* Awareness of the consequences of separation/divorce for adults and children

7. \* Ability to work with the substantive information encountered in separation/divorce mediation
8. Ability to build a working relationship and a constructive process with the parties
9. Ability to facilitate communication between the parties by using specific skills (e.g., active listening, reframing)
10. \* Ability to facilitate problem solving between the parties, especially in the areas of divorce including, but not limited to, parenting, support, division of assets/liabilities, insurance, tax filing, etc.;
11. Knowledge of conflict management skills;
12. Understanding concepts of mediator influence and neutrality;
13. Knowledge of standards of practice and how ethical issues are resolved;
14. Ability to recognize when the assistance of other professionals might be helpful to the mediation process and to facilitate this discussion with the parties; and
15. Awareness of what additional knowledge/skills/experience/supervision may be necessary for the successful practice of mediation and how to get it.

*\* For 30-hour Family Mediation Programs, substitute appropriate content area(s).*

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**General Guidelines for Training Approval**

Thirty-hour Family Mediation Training Programs and 40-hour Divorce Mediation Training Programs are viewed by the Association for Conflict Resolution as introductory courses for the practitioner-to-be. They differ from more generic mediation training programs in that they are family-focused. ACR-approved training programs, including skills-building and role-play exercises, must reflect this focus.

Training approval will be based on three distinct components of the application:

1. the applicant's qualifications to offer training
2. the training materials (student manual and handouts)
3. the design of the training program

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### **Applicant's qualifications to offer training**

Minimally, all applicants must be current Advanced Practitioner member of ACR's Family Section and must have previous experience as a presenter in relevant workshops, seminars, and courses. To ensure currency and relevance of experience, applicants must have mediated no fewer than 20 family cases within the past two years. Active involvement and currency in the field (e.g., service on local councils, participation in continuing education opportunities, etc.) is desirable but not required. Please submit the following:

- current vitae evidencing both mediation and presentation experience
- no fewer than 20 completed evaluation forms from previous 30- or 40-hour family/divorce trainings
- a 30-minute audio or video cassette of a 30- or 40-hour family/divorce training you have previously offered

*Please note that any co-trainer in your program who participates actively for 20 hours or more must meet the same criteria.*

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### **The Student Manual**

Submit a clear and comprehensive training manual for students. Materials must be more than a compilation of materials from other sources. Your manual should be a reflection of your contributions to the training experience and therefore some of the materials should be written by you. While some copied materials from leaders in the field are suggested, you must provide appropriate attribution to adhere to copyright law. Permission must be granted from the source (except for short quotes) and proper attribution must be noted.

Training materials should be a guide to which your students can turn when they set to practice and should therefore stand alone as a guide to mastering the content of family/divorce mediation, regardless of the training approach. Good questions to ask yourself are, "If a student were to be absent for any portion of the training program, would the manual provide what the student missed?" "Would a student be able to return to the manual at a later date and pick up necessary knowledge or skills to improve his/her competency as a mediator?"

At a minimum, the manual and training materials should address the following content areas: conflict resolution, mediation theory, communication skills, divorce reactions and needs\*, financial information, domestic violence, and ethics/ACR Standards of Practice.

*\* For 30-hour Family Mediation programs, substitute appropriate content areas.*

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## **Design of the program**

ACR reviewers are unable to observe the training program for which you seek approval, so it is important that you fully describe the nature of the training experience. To assist you in this effort, the ACR Family Section has identified 15 outcomes that we believe are basic requirements for any family and/or divorce mediation training program.

Please complete a separate strategy sheet for each of the 15 outcomes and identify what strategies you will use to accomplish each goal. Write 1-2 paragraphs under each outcome to demonstrate your specific teaching methods and what trainees will experience. Submissions must contain a clear plan describing what information will be presented, how it will be delivered, and what opportunities your students will have to practice the skills involved. Confine yourself to one side of an 8.5" X 11" page for each outcome. If referring to pages in your manual, please list the page numbers. Forms for your use and a sample response are included with the application.

Please note time frames in your training agenda to help reviewers identify where you are placing your emphasis. Training programs should include a variety of approaches (discussion, lecture, role play, video, demonstration etc.) and provide guidance on what students might need after completing the training. For example, what resources and suggestions will you provide for students to enhance their skills and increase their depth of understanding of concepts? What opportunities or resources exist for students to gain experience and supervision necessary for successful practice of mediation?

Please also note the following:

- **Assigned reading:** While extensive supplementary reading is encouraged, reading time may not be counted toward the 30- or 40-hour requirement.
- **Role Play:** There is a significant difference between role-plays and demonstrations. The latter SHOW someone how YOU do something, while the former provide the student with the opportunity to develop and practice a skill and receive feedback on his/her mastery. A minimum of six hours of role-play is required for both 30- and 40-hour training programs. Please include your role-play scenarios with your application, and describe how each is incorporated into the training agenda and schedule. Trainers should not attempt to supervise more than two small role-plays (groups of four or fewer) or more than one large role-play (groups of five or more) at any one time. Using additional trainers/coaches is encouraged for this phase of training.
- **Scheduling:** Training programs must be taught over five days or more for 40-hour programs (four days or more for 30-hour programs) in blocks of three or more hours each. For each training day of six hours or more, there must be a 30-minute meal break and 30 additional minutes for breaks. Each day, a maximum of 30 break minutes may be counted toward the 30- or 40- hour requirement.
- **Trainer participation:** At all times, a trainer must be present who meets the requirements for Advanced Practitioner membership in ACR.

If your training program meets the above criteria, please click on the link to the left to download an Application for Approval and submit it with supporting documentation to the ACR Office.