

## PREPARING FOR EDUCATION MEDIATION

To prepare for education mediation, organize your child's educational and financial records, clearly define your goals and priorities, and write a brief opening statement to outline your key concerns. You should also prepare a basic offer and concession strategy, as mediation involves compromise, and maintain a calm, reasonable demeanor throughout the process.

### Organize Your Records

- Gather all relevant documents:
  - Request and review your child's complete educational record, including evaluations, previous IEPs, progress reports, and any correspondence with the school district.
- Review communications:
  - Keep a record of any communications you've had with the school that raised concerns about your child's progress.

### Define Your Goals and Strategy

- Identify and prioritize concerns:
  - Make a list of your concerns and rank them, with your most important issue at the top.
- Outline your goals:
  - Clearly state what you want to accomplish through mediation, focusing on substantive issues and how to address educational harm to your child.
- Prepare for compromise:
  - Develop a basic offer and concession strategy, remembering that mediation is a negotiation where you may not get everything you want.
- Know your bottom line:
  - Decide on the offers you will consider and which ones you will reject.

### Understand the Process and Legal Framework

- Learn the law:
  - Research how the law applies to your child's specific educational situation and dispute.
- Understand your role:
  - Know that mediation is a voluntary process focused on reaching a mutually agreeable solution, not determining blame.
- Prepare an opening statement:
  - Write a short (3-5 minute) opening statement to clearly present your perspective, or provide key points to the mediator and school in advance.

### Logistics and Representation

- Confirm attendees:
  - Ensure that the school will send a decision-maker with the power to agree to a settlement.

- Consider your support team:
  - Decide if you want to bring an education advocate, or another support person with you to mediation.
- Arrange for childcare:
  - Make appropriate arrangements for your child's care during the mediation session.

### **Maintain a Positive Approach**

- Stay calm:
  - Aim to appear levelheaded, focused, and reasonable.
- Focus on solutions:
  - Concentrate on finding collaborative, "win-win" options rather than assigning blame or making accusatory statements.