



## Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco Alternative Dispute Resolution Information Package



The plaintiff must serve a copy of the ADR Information Package on each defendant along with the complaint. Cross-complainants must serve a copy of the ADR Information Package on any new parties to the action together with the cross-complaint. (CRC 3.221(c).)

### WHAT IS ADR?

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is the term used to describe the various options available for settling a dispute without a trial. There are many different ADR processes, the most common forms of which are mediation, arbitration and settlement conferences. In ADR, trained, impartial people decide disputes or help parties decide disputes themselves. They can help parties resolve disputes without having to go to trial.

### WHY CHOOSE ADR?

It is the policy of the Superior Court that every long cause, non-criminal, non-juvenile case should participate either in an early settlement conference, mediation, arbitration, early neutral evaluation or some other alternative dispute resolution process prior to trial. (Local Rule 4.)

ADR can have a number of advantages over traditional litigation:

- **ADR can save time.** A dispute often can be resolved in a matter of months, even weeks, through ADR, while a lawsuit can take years.
- **ADR can save money,** including court costs, attorney fees, and expert fees.
- **ADR encourages participation.** The parties may have more opportunities to tell their story than in court and may have more control over the outcome of the case.
- **ADR is more satisfying.** For all the above reasons, many people participating in ADR have reported a high degree of satisfaction.

**\*\*Electing to participate in an ADR process does not stop the time period to respond to a complaint or cross-complaint\*\***

### WHAT ARE THE ADR OPTIONS?

The San Francisco Superior Court offers different types of ADR processes for general civil matters. The programs are described below:

#### 1) MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES

Settlement conferences are appropriate in any case where settlement is an option. The goal of settlement conferences is to provide participants an opportunity to reach a mutually acceptable settlement that resolves all or part of a dispute. Mandatory settlement conferences are ordered by the court and are often held near the date a case is set for trial, although they may be held earlier if appropriate. A party may elect to apply to the Presiding Judge for a specially set mandatory settlement conference by filing an ex parte application. See Local Rule 5.0 for further instructions. Upon approval by the Presiding Judge, the court will schedule the conference and assign a settlement conference officer.

## 2) MEDIATION

Mediation is a voluntary, flexible, and confidential process in which a neutral third party facilitates negotiations. The goal of mediation is to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement that resolves all or part of a dispute after exploring the interests, needs, and priorities of the parties in light of relevant evidence and the law.

**(A) MEDIATION SERVICES OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF SAN FRANCISCO (BASF)**, in cooperation with the Superior Court, is designed to help civil litigants resolve disputes before they incur substantial costs in litigation. While it is best to utilize the program at the outset of litigation, parties may use the program at any time while a case is pending. Experienced professional mediators work with parties to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. The mediators provide one hour of preparation time and the first two hours of mediation time. Mediation time beyond that is charged at the mediator's hourly rate. BASF pre-screens all mediators based upon strict educational and experience requirements. Parties can select their mediator from the panels at [www.sfbar.org/mediation](http://www.sfbar.org/mediation) or BASF can assist with mediator selection. BASF staff handles conflict checks and full case management. The success rate for the program is 67% and the satisfaction rate is 99%. BASF charges an administrative fee of \$295 per party. The hourly mediator fee beyond the first three hours will vary depending on the mediator selected. Waivers of the fee are available to those who qualify. For more information, call 415-982-1600 or email [adr@sfbar.org](mailto:adr@sfbar.org).

**(B) JUDICIAL MEDIATION PROGRAM** provides mediation with a San Francisco Superior Court judge for civil cases, which include but are not limited to, personal injury, construction defect, employment, professional malpractice, insurance coverage, toxic torts and industrial accidents. Parties may utilize this program at any time throughout the litigation process. Parties interested in judicial mediation should file a Stipulation to Judicial Mediation indicating a joint request for inclusion in the program. A preference for a specific judge may be indicated. The court will coordinate assignment of cases for the program. There is no charge. Information about the Judicial Mediation Program may be found by visiting the ADR page on the court's website: [www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution](http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution)

**(C) PRIVATE MEDIATION:** Although not currently a part of the court's ADR program, parties may select any private mediator of their choice. The selection and coordination of private mediation is the responsibility of the parties. Parties may find mediators and organizations on the Internet. The cost of private mediation will vary depending on the mediator selected.

**(D) COMMUNITY BOARDS MEDIATION SERVICES:** Mediation services are offered by Community Boards (CB), a nonprofit resolution center, under the Dispute Resolution Programs Act. CB utilizes a three-person panel mediation process in which mediators work as a team to assist the parties in reaching a shared solution. To the extent possible, mediators are selected to reflect the demographics of the disputants. CB has a success rate of 85% for parties reaching a resolution and a consumer satisfaction rate of 99%. The fee is \$45-\$100 to open a case, and an hourly rate of \$180 for complex cases. Reduction and waiver of the fee are available. For more information, call 415-920-3820 or visit [communityboards.org](http://communityboards.org).

### **3) ARBITRATION**

An arbitrator is a neutral attorney who presides at a hearing where the parties present evidence through exhibits and testimony. The arbitrator applies the law to the facts of the case and makes an award based upon the merits of the case.

#### **(A) JUDICIAL ARBITRATION**

When the court orders a case to arbitration it is called "judicial arbitration". The goal of arbitration is to provide parties with an adjudication that is earlier, faster, less formal, and usually less expensive than a trial. Pursuant to CCP 1141.11, all civil actions in which the amount in controversy is \$50,000 or less, and no party seeks equitable relief, shall be ordered to arbitration. (Upon stipulation of all parties, other civil matters may be submitted to judicial arbitration.) An arbitrator is chosen from the court's arbitration panel. Arbitrations are generally held between 7 and 9 months after a complaint has been filed. Judicial arbitration is not binding unless all parties agree to be bound by the arbitrator's decision. Any party may request a trial within 60 days after the arbitrator's award has been filed. Local Rule 4.1 allows for mediation in lieu of judicial arbitration, so long as the parties file a stipulation to mediate after being assigned to judicial arbitration. There is no cost to the parties for judicial arbitration.

#### **(B) PRIVATE ARBITRATION**

Although not currently a part of the court's ADR program, civil disputes may also be resolved through private arbitration. Here, the parties voluntarily consent to arbitration. If all parties agree, private arbitration may be binding and the parties give up the right to judicial review of the arbitrator's decision. In private arbitration, the parties select a private arbitrator and are responsible for paying the arbitrator's fees.

#### **HOW DO I PARTICIPATE IN ADR?**

Litigants may elect to participate in ADR at any point in a case. General civil cases may voluntarily enter into the court's or court-affiliated ADR programs by any of the following means:

- Filing a Stipulation to ADR: Complete and file the Stipulation form (attached to this packet and available on the court's website); or
- Indicating your ADR preferences on the Case Management Statement (available on the court's website); or
- Contacting the court's ADR Department (see below), the Bar Association of San Francisco's ADR Services, or Community Boards.

**For more information about ADR programs or dispute resolution alternatives, contact:**

Superior Court Alternative Dispute Resolution  
400 McAllister Street, Room 103-A, San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-551-3869

Or, visit the court's ADR page at [www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution](http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution)

**TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THE COURT'S ADR PROGRAMS, PLEASE COMPLETE AND FILE THE ATTACHED STIPULATION TO ADR AND SUBMIT IT TO THE COURT. YOU MUST ALSO CONTACT BASF OR COMMUNITY BOARDS TO ENROLL IN THEIR LISTED PROGRAMS. THE COURT DOES NOT FORWARD COPIES OF STIPULATIONS TO BASF OR COMMUNITY BOARDS.**

ATTORNEY OR PARTY WITHOUT ATTORNEY (Name and address)	<i>FOR COURT USE ONLY</i>
TELEPHONE NO.:	
ATTORNEY FOR (Name):	
<b>SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO</b> 400 McAllister Street San Francisco, CA 94102-4514	
PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER:	
DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT:	
<b>STIPULATION TO ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)</b>	CASE NUMBER: _____ <b>DEPARTMENT 610</b>

**1) The parties hereby stipulate that this action shall be submitted to the following ADR process:**

- Mediation Services of the Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF)** - Experienced professional mediators, screened and approved, provide one hour of preparation and the first two hours of mediation time for a BASF administrative fee of \$295 per party. Mediation time beyond that is charged at the mediator's hourly rate. Waivers of the administrative fee are available to those who qualify. BASF assists parties with mediator selection, conflicts checks and full case management. [www.sfbar.org/mediation](http://www.sfbar.org/mediation)
- Mediation Services of Community Boards (CB)** – Service in conjunction with DRPA, CB provides case development and one three-hour mediation session. Additional sessions may be scheduled. The cost is \$45-\$100 to open a case, and an hourly rate of \$180 for complex cases. Reduction and waiver of the fee are available to those who qualify. [communityboards.org](http://communityboards.org)
- Private Mediation** - Mediators and ADR provider organizations charge by the hour or by the day, current market rates. ADR organizations may also charge an administrative fee. Parties may find experienced mediators and organizations on the Internet.
- Judicial Arbitration** - Non-binding arbitration is available to cases in which the amount in controversy is \$50,000 or less and no equitable relief is sought. The court appoints a pre-screened arbitrator who will issue an award. There is no fee for this program. [www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution](http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution)
- Judicial Mediation** - The Judicial Mediation program offers mediation in civil litigation with a San Francisco Superior Court judge familiar with the area of the law that is the subject of the controversy. There is no fee for this program. [www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution](http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/civil/dispute-resolution)

Judge Requested (see list of Judges currently participating in the program): \_\_\_\_\_

Date range requested for Judicial Mediation (from the filing of stipulation to Judicial Mediation):

- 30-90 days  90-120 days  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Other ADR process (describe)** \_\_\_\_\_

**2) The parties agree that the ADR Process shall be completed by (date):** \_\_\_\_\_

**3) Plaintiff(s) and Defendant(s) further agree as follows:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Party Stipulating

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Party Stipulating

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Party or Attorney Executing Stipulation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Party or Attorney Executing Stipulation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Party or Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Party or Attorney

- Plaintiff  Defendant  Cross-defendant

- Plaintiff  Defendant  Cross-defendant

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional signature(s) attached**