

Differences between Child & Family Teams and Mediation Services

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Being a facilitator of the Child and Family Team (CFT) process is not the same as being a mediator. Although some mediation skills are helpful for a CFT Facilitator, there are many key differences between traditional mediation services and the CFT process. The following chart explores some of these differences.

Mediation	Child & Family Team Facilitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mediator is a completely neutral party who has no interest in anything other than a solution being reached between the participants. • Participants enter mediation with very little, if any, preparation for participating in the experience. • Mediation may sometimes have a negative atmosphere, where conflict results in others being blamed or criticized, despite the efforts of the mediator to keep a safe working environment. • Mediation is often a one-time process, not intended to be set up to follow-up on plans and agreements made during the meeting. • Mediation does not make an attempt to generate a plan that is based in the strengths and culture of the people involved. • Attorneys are often present during mediation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A CFT facilitator has the focus of keeping the CFT process a family-driven, strengths-based environment, not just a neutral environment. • Participants should enter CFT meetings having been prepared for the experience by the CFT facilitator during the engagement process. Participants should come ready to work within in a strengths-based philosophy. • CFT meetings operate on a strengths-based philosophy that is free from criticism and blaming. • CFT meetings are held as often as needed to ensure that the plan is developed, adjusted, and carried out. • CFT plans are based on the individualized strengths, culture, preferences, and needs of the family. • Due to the supportive nature of CFT meetings, attorneys often do not find the need to be present.

This is not to say that mediation is not a valuable process; it has many valuable aspects in legal arenas. Child and Family Teams have an expanded and enhanced focus. They are not intended simply to reach an agreement. Instead, CFTs are intended to create, monitor,

and carry out a strengths-based, individualized plan that will help a child and family reach their goals.