

## SAMPLE SITUATIONS

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### Non-Profit Organizations

■ The board of GoodWorks is split between its visionary founder and its business-oriented new executive. A mediator who was hired to assess the situation recommended a private mediation with the executive, the founder, and one other long-time board member, to be followed by a facilitated “clearing the air” session with the whole board.

■ A Narcotics Anonymous group has met at the Community Center for four years and has been arguing with the staff for the past two. Representatives from each have agreed to sit down and discuss several thorny issues: unpaid fees, the Center’s upkeep of facilities, scheduling problems, littering, and innuendoes that NA types of people are not wanted at the Center.

### Consumer

■ The Stones have refused to pay Frank Davies, a local carpenter, until he refinishes a door and several cupboards. This work was not part of the written contract, but the Stones claim Davies agreed to do these side jobs. Davies called the local mediation service.

■ A public hospital has trouble getting patients to pay. With a mediator they work out a streamlined agreement form for incoming patients, and a process, which may or may not involve the mediator, to meet with patients to work out a realistic payment schedule.

### Neighbors

■ The Schiffleys and the Klopps have both filed complaints against each other claiming harassment. They share a common driveway and have fought about cars, loud music, and torn-up lawns for six years. The Klopps’ valuable chestnut tree shades the Schiffleys’ garden. The magistrate referred them to dispute resolution.

■ Wilma, 73 and living alone, complains that Tim, Paul, and Chester, neighboring 12-year-olds, have been harassing her. Lately, the parents have also become involved. Accusations include a vandalized garden, some confiscated frisbees, and late-night phone calls. A senior citizen center arranged the mediation.



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### Landlord / Tenant

■ The lease permits animals but the landlady, Mrs. DiGiovanni, insists that Parker get rid of his cat. Neighboring apartments have complained that his cat is left for hours in the hall without food and smells up the building. Parker claims that DiGiovanni is harassing him for racial reasons. He has a long-term lease with a mediation clause.

■ Victor moved out of Garden View Apartments because he couldn't afford the rent. He has been looking for work for six months. The landlord found damages exceeding the initial deposit. Victor admits to some of the damage but has no money to pay for them. The landlord called the city's mediation program because he doubted that going to court would help recover the money.

### Family and Friends

■ Mike, 16, ran off to stay with a friend after a raging argument with his father. The father is angry about Mike's language and lack of a job, while Mike is outraged that his father won't allow him to play sports after school. Mike's mother insists that Mike come home. He refuses, but agrees to come to a mediation.

■ Martha and Alice were good friends who were active in a local theater company. However, arguments about some items that were loaned and accusations of betraying confidences have resulted in a bitter break. Martha has dropped out of a production 3 weeks before show time so she won't have to see Alice. Members of the company have pressed them into mediating the situation.

■ Henry is increasingly forgetful and frail. After months of acrimony and denial, his three children and several grandchildren and Henry are meeting with a mediator to work out an agreement detailing who should handle Henry's money, who will find him an appropriate nursing home, and who will clean out and sell the house.



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### Schools and Colleges

- Harry and Cliff are roommates. They are quarreling about sleeping hours, laptop “borrowing”, and smelly laundry strewn around the room. Harry complains that Cliff’s girlfriend is always there and he has no privacy. The resident advisor recommended mediation.
- Althea and Sheila had a major fight during Art class and both were suspended. Althea claims that Sheila smashed her sculpture on purpose. Althea pushed Sheila on the stairway. The school is afraid that their friends will make the feud worse. Althea and Sheila were asked to meet with student mediators to talk things over before coming back to school.
- Xian has complained to the University about a teaching assistant’s punitive grading and rude treatment after he challenged the TA in class. The professor was unable to determine what had really happened and suggested the TA ask the campus ombuds office to mediate.

### Congregations

- Tensions came to a head during the last Building and Grounds Committee meeting when Barbara walked out. Most members are friends of Arthur, who believes that the congregation should care for the property themselves in order to save money. Barbara has had many arguments with Arthur over slipshod maintenance and wants to hire a caretaker. She is furious with his condescending, autocratic manner; he says she is a whining airhead. The whole committee is meeting with a mediator.
- Representatives of a church congregation are meeting with neighbors to discuss neighborhood complaints: noise, parking in front of their houses, and a political banner about abortion on the church lawn. The neighborhood leader asked a mediator to facilitate the meeting.



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### Small business

■ Sydney manages a craft shop. He has told the owner, Teresa, that he will quit unless she fires her niece Myra, who works there on weekends. Teresa has talked to both Sydney and Myra separately and established that Myra's competence is not an issue; the two just have very different styles and irritate each other easily. Teresa has asked Sydney and Myra to meet with a mediator before she makes a decision.

■ Electrician Gerry thought he had a good personal relationship with the owner of Tom's Toy Store. However, Tom's Toys is now four months behind in paying for a major rewiring job he did for them. The owner won't return his calls. Gerry would like to get his money without having to take Tom's Toys to court. When the mediator talks to Tom's Toys, she finds out that the store is withholding payment because the job was not done to their specifications.

### Corporations and bureaucracies

■ Two managers from a manufacturing department came to the company ombuds office, which offers confidential advising, mediation, and advocacy services to anyone in the company. They had approached a marketing manager to discuss a long list of complaints about the poor coordination between their departments. However, the marketing manager said he had no time to talk with such incompetent people, and walked out. The ombuds person met with the marketing manager several times before persuading him that it was in his best interest to have a confidential meeting with the manufacturing managers before this mess hit the vice president's desk.

■ Three secretaries who share one large office communicate through curt notes because they are no longer speaking to each other. Nicole, their supervisor, has no cause to fire any of them and has tried various strategies to get them to work together better. But whatever the problem is, they aren't willing to discuss it with her or each other. Last week, Nicole ordered them to sit down with someone trained in mediation from Personnel and deal with it.

