



Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives (JITI) FAQ for Mediation Referral

The Ministry of Justice has made a commitment to the Legal Services Society to provide \$2 million a year for three years, starting in 2014/2015, to fund five pilot projects at LSS. These FAQ will help answer questions about the Mediation Referral pilot project.

Mediation Referrals—launched in November 2014

Mediation Referral is a pilot program offered by LSS and Mediate BC that increases access to affordable mediation services. Under the program, mediators will work with clients to achieve early resolution of family disputes.

Questions	Answers
What services are provided by the Mediation Referral Program?	<p>The Mediation Referral Program will provide services to people with family law issues who are willing to participate in mediation. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation services by a private family mediator • Information and options for resolving legal issues out-of-court • Helping families to reach an out-of-court agreement • Referrals to advice services to prepare and support the client through mediation
What is new and innovative about this service?	<p>The Mediation Referral Program is innovative and transformative in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will provide a referral to Mediate BC for 6 hours of paid family mediation services for people who are financially eligible but do not have a legal issue that qualifies them for representation by a legal aid lawyer. <i>Previously, Legal Services Society did not provide paid referrals to Mediate BC for family issues</i> • The program is funding a limited amount of mediation services to help families who qualify address property, debt and spousal support issues in addition to any child related issues. <i>Previously, Legal Services Society did not fund mediation services to help families address property, debt and spousal support issues.</i> • As part of this program, Mediate BC will offer mediation services beyond the 6 paid hours at sliding scale rates based on income and assets. <i>Previously, sliding scale rates were offered only by some individual mediators. They were not part of a Mediate BC sponsored program, available to all participants.</i>

<p>How does a client access the service?</p>	<p>Mediation is provided by mediators throughout the province who, in some cases, may mediate by using the phone or a web-based platform (known as “distance mediation”). Appointments with mediators may vary depending on the schedules of the parties. Clients must apply for the service by visiting a legal aid office or contacting the Call Centre.</p>
<p>How will the pilot improve the efficiency of and timely access to the justice system?</p>	<p>By focussing on early resolution, fewer cases will proceed to trial, freeing up court resources.</p>
<p>How will the service benefit families?</p>	<p>The Mediation Referral Program will benefit families by giving them an opportunity to minimize conflict and resolve their family law problems out of court where possible. Collaborative problem-solving on separation and divorce will result in enduring outcomes that support the well-being of children and families.</p>
<p>Why doesn't LSS increase the number of representation referrals instead of adding these services?</p>	<p>The pilot programs are part of the Ministry of Justice initiative for Justice Transformation. LSS can use the funding only for services that are innovative or transformative, and cannot use it to increase the capacity of existing tariff bar services.</p>
<p>How will the pilots be evaluated to determine if the new models improve the efficiency of and timely access to the justice system?</p>	<p>An independent evaluator will use the best data available to determine whether the pilots have met their objectives. The evaluations will rely on existing data sources, including data gathered by LSS and the Court Services Branch, as well as data generated by client and service provider surveys.</p>