

STATE OF MICHIGAN 17th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT KENT COUNTY	MARITAL DISSOLUTION MEDIATION PROGRAM	LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2008 - 06
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This pilot project was open to all the Community Dispute Resolution Program Centers through a RFP process administered by the Office of Dispute Resolution through a grant from the State Bar of Michigan.

Upon approval by the Michigan Supreme Court and effective until further order of the Court, the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit adopts the following pilot program to mediate qualifying cases.

1. **List of Mediators** – Under this plan, the ADR Clerk shall prepare all mediation referral orders for judicial signature on cases ordered to the Dispute Resolution Center (the “Center”), the Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP) for Kent County. All mediators used by the Dispute Resolution Center for purposes of this project shall be qualified by the Center. The Center will accept all qualifying cases unless there is a conflict of interest.
2. **Assignment** – Within (35) days after the filing of a responsive pleading, Judges shall order qualifying cases to mediation. Orders of Referral for Mediation shall be based upon findings that the divorcing parties meet the following:
 - No minor children between the parties in the marriage;
 - Both parties are self represented;
 - At least one party meets an established poverty guideline; and
 - The matter is contested.

All cases ordered to mediation under this pilot project shall be referred to the Center. In addition, the parties may file a motion to remove the case from mediation within fourteen (14) days of the date of the referral order.

3. **Steering Committee** – Partners in the pilot project include representatives from the 17th Circuit Court, the Center, YWCA, Safe Haven, Legal Assistance Center (LAC), and Legal Aid of Western Michigan.
4. **Case Management** – The pilot project will include all Judges in the Family Division of the Circuit Court. If mediation fails to resolve the case, the matter shall return to the assigned judge for continuation.

5. **Information Dissemination** – Upon request, the ADR Clerk shall make available written documentation describing this pilot project.
6. **Attendance** – Attendance at mediation is governed by MCR 3.216(H).
7. **Fees** – To be eligible for the MDMP pilot, one or more of the parties’ income level must be less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. If the guidelines are met, no fees will be assessed to either party for this service.
8. **Submission of Documents** – Each party needs to submit to the Court a Scheduling Conference Statement and a Domestic Violence Screening Form.
9. **Reports and Further Proceedings** – The Center shall submit a Mediation Notice (7) days after receipt of the referral order. Within (7) days of the conclusion of the mediation, the Center shall submit a Status Report to the ADR Clerk indicating only the date of completion of the process, who participated in the mediation, and whether the case was resolved or whether further proceedings are contemplated. When the case settles, the parties shall file with the Court a stipulated order or judgment within twenty-one (21) days of the mediation. Through the pilot project’s partnership with the LAC and pro bono practitioners, the parties will be given procedural information on how to use the settlement agreement to enter a final order and/or judgment. If the case did not settle, the case shall return to the assigned judge for continuation.
10. **Evaluation of MDMP** – The ADR Clerk, in conjunction with the Center and the ADR Plan Oversight Committee, shall use an evaluation form to assess the perceptions of the participants regarding the effectiveness of the mediation referral and process. The ADR Clerk shall collect data to evaluate the efficacy of this project. The report shall be available in the ADR Clerk’s Office. The Chief Judge, ADR Clerk and designated parties shall meet to review the program.
11. **Address** – The Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan is located at 678 Front Ave NW Ste 250, Grand Rapids, MI 49504-5368. Phone number is (616)774-0121.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Date

Hon. Paul J. Sullivan P-24139
Chief Circuit Judge