



FAMILY LAW
AND PARENTAL
SUPPORT AUTHORITY



Mediation talks

Support for parents during separation

Dnr. AD 2025-448

What are mediation talks?

Parents who are having difficulty agreeing on issues relating to custody, residence, contact, and how both parents will contribute to the child's maintenance, can contact the municipality for help in the form of mediation talks. Mediation talks are led by the municipality and can take place during a separation, after a separation or with parents who have never lived together.

Mediation talks give parents an opportunity to agree on issues concerning their child's custody, residence, contact and maintenance instead of going to court. If the parents have already begun court proceedings, the court may initiate mediation talks if it considers that the parents should be able to resolve their disputes this way. Mediation talks are voluntary, but both parents need to participate for the talks to take place.

Municipalities offer mediation talks

Parents apply for mediation talks by contacting their municipality. All municipalities must offer mediation talks to parents who need them. The mediation talks are usually handled by the family law unit within municipal social services, which will also have a unit for family counselling.

The family law unit helps with a wide range of family law matters, including mediation talks, issues related to custody, residence and contact, issues of paternity and parenthood, and adoptions. The family counselling unit offers support and assistance to couples and families experiencing conflict in their relationship. Contact details for family law and family counselling can be found on the municipalities' websites.

What is the aim of the talks?

The aim of the talks is for parents to find ways to cooperate on matters regarding their child. The idea is to reach agreement on issues such as custody, residence, contact and maintenance without having to go to court. Within the framework of the mediation talks, parents can be helped to draw up an agreement on all of the above. For such an agreement to be legally valid and enforceable, it must be made in writing and approved by the local social welfare committee. In the mediation talks, parents can also discuss how they will jointly provide for the child's maintenance.

Facts about voluntary mediation talks

- The mediation talks are free of charge.
- The talks are confidential.
- The talks are structured to enable joint agreements to be reached.
- The mediators can help to draw up agreements on custody, residence and contact.
- The mediators have no right to make decisions about custody, residence, contact or maintenance. They are there to support the parents in reaching an agreement based on the best interests of the child.

Focus on the best interests of the child

By law, the best interests of the child must be the deciding factor in all matters concerning custody, residence and contact. The best interests and needs of the child are therefore the starting point for the mediation talks. The child's views and wishes must also be taken into account, in accordance with the child's age and maturity. Parents being able to reach solutions on custody, residence, contact and maintenance between themselves, instead of a court making all the decisions, is hugely important for a child.

The child's participation

Children have the right to be involved in matters that concern them. The extent to which the child is involved in the mediation talks may depend on the issues being discussed by the parents. The assessment of whether it is appropriate to talk to the child as part of the parents' mediation talks is based on the child's age and maturity, as well as the child's own need to receive information and to talk about their situation.

How do mediation talks work?

Parents who wish to apply for mediation talks can contact the municipality's family law unit. Some municipalities have application forms to fill in, while others accept applications by phone.

One or two mediators will lead the mediation talks, and they are usually social workers with further education qualifications. The mediation talks sometimes begin with individual meetings with each parent so the mediator can get an idea of the issues that the parents want to address and how the upcoming talks should be structured.

The mediation talks are then usually conducted jointly with both parents. The number of meetings required for the mediation talks varies. One meeting may be enough for some couples, while others may need to come together several times. The mediator will explain the confidentiality rules that apply to the talks. During the talks, the parents can find out all about the relevant legal rules and discuss the issues that they need to address as parents. Such issues might be: Where will our child live? Will we have joint custody? How will we arrange contact with the child? How will we split the expenses for our child between us?



Custody, residence, contact, maintenance – an overview

The municipality has a legal obligation to offer parents mediation talks and to help them draw up agreements on custody, residence and contact. Chapter 6 of the Swedish Parental Code contains information on custody, residence and contact, and Chapter 7 contains information on parents' maintenance obligations.

Custody

Having custody of a child makes you the custodial parent. The custodial parent is generally also the child's legal guardian. A child may be under the custody of both parents (joint custody) or one parent (sole custody). The custodial parent has legal responsibility for the child and responsibility for ensuring that the child's basic needs are met. The custodial parent may not necessarily meet the child's needs themselves. It could be that the non-custodial parent does so.

Residence

Parents who have joint custody can decide for themselves which parent the child will live with, without the involvement of either the court or the social welfare committee. If the parents have joint custody, the child can live alternately with both parents. However, the child can only be registered with one of them in the national population register.

Contact

The child has the right to visit the parent with whom they do not live, except when this is not in the child's best interests. The contact is primarily for the child, and the child's interests and needs must always be the deciding factor. A parent thus has no absolute right to have contact with their child.

Maintenance

A parent is responsible for supporting their child, regardless of whether they live with the child and regardless of who has custody of the child. The parent who does not have custody of the child and does not live with the child meets this responsibility by paying a maintenance allowance to the other parent. In addition to the cost of food, housing and clothing, the maintenance allowance is also expected to cover things such as insurance, leisure activities, childcare fees, medication, glasses, a mobile phone, travel between the parents for contact and much more besides.

If you'd like to find out more (in Swedish)

The Family Law and Parental Support Authority's website www.mfof.se has extra information about mediation talks. In addition, you will find publications on how the municipality's family law unit handles cases concerning custody, residence and contact. You can also find out more about child maintenance.

Other agencies

The websites for the Swedish Social Insurance Agency ([Försäkringskassans](http://Forsakringskassans)) and the Swedish Consumer Agency (Konsumentverkets) contain additional information that you might find helpful during a separation.