



## THE ORION PROGRAM A Professional Internship Program for Family Mediators

### **MISSION OF ORION MEDIATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

**We as professional mediators have a responsibility to the field of conflict resolution/mediation, to our emerging practitioners, and to the clients of those practitioners. We are committed to mentoring new professionals to share our experience and skill.**

### **ABOUT ORION'S MEMBER MENTORS**

We are all highly experienced family mediation professionals. Many of us have a diversified practice, working with conflicts other than family matters. All of us are experienced Divorce and Family mediation practitioners.

The Orion mentors all:

- contract independently with interns
- operate by the same broad program guidelines
- have autonomy in determining the intern's progression through the program
- collaborate with other Orion mentors in supporting interns and providing helpful resources
- are committed to giving direct and honest feedback to interns, to moving interns appropriately through the levels, and to reviewing and/or terminating the mentor/intern relationship if it appears that the intern cannot be successful in the field, does not meet the

requirements of the mentor, or the intern feels that the relationship is not as helpful as he/she wishes.

- refund any unused pre-payment for mentoring hours at the termination of the mentoring process

**ORION:**

- Is independent of any agency, organization or program other than the North Star Group
- Does not guarantee competency or quality of any practitioner that has been an intern in the program. Orion mentors are committed to giving honest professional feedback to interns regarding performance, strengths, areas in need of improvement, and concerns.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND GUIDELINES**

### **YOUR NEXT STEP IN CREATING A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE**

In order to enter the program, the applicant will be interviewed and assessed by the person contacted to be the primary mentor. The intern, after acceptance by the mentor, moves through the program at a rate determined by the mentor. For example, an intern may need only one session in one stage but need to remain in another stage for a longer time in order to strengthen a particular set of skills or abilities. Acceptance into the program is the decision of individual program mentors.

**Note** – while the internship program is designed to meet the requirements of the Vermont Family Court Program, it is not associated with VFCMP, and is not the only source of supervision that is required in order to be admitted into VFCMP. In order to provide a high quality service, however, it is the form of supervision/mentoring offered by Orion.

Once in the Orion program, the intern can expect to be working regularly with either their mentor or another Orion mentor. Orion mentors may share information between themselves about the intern's progress.

Program applicants are required to have finished a Divorce Mediation Training that meets the standards of the VFCMP or of the Association for Conflict Resolution.

Mentors may require that applicants already will have 10 hours of actual mediation experience.

## **All program interns are entitled to:**

- consultation phone calls which will happen once a month and will be led by a program mentor
- use of a group communication tool by which interns may ask questions
- participation in quarterly meetings of interns and mentors for case reviews and consultations
- telephone consultation with primary mentor on any case in which the intern is the solo or lead mediator
- back-up consultation with other mentors in the event that the primary mentor is not available
- multiple opportunities to draft documents and have consultation on their work
- certificate to verify to VFCMP, ACR or other organizations that the intern has been a primary, co-mediator, or solo mediator in an identified number of mediations (or sessions).

## **Phases of the program**

### **Level 1:**

**Observation/Assistance** – in which the intern becomes acquainted with the Divorce/Family mediation process and assists the mentor by taking notes, asking clarification questions, etc.

### **Level 2:**

**Second chair mediator** – in which the intern is more actively engaged but following the lead of the lead mediator.

### **Level 3:**

**Co-mediator** – in which the intern and mentor share equal responsibility for the mediator role. The intern is expected to think strategically and actively participate in helping the parties do their work. The mentor remains the “safety net” or default decision maker if there is a difference of opinion on direction. The intern may stay in Level 3 for the remainder of their training, may move to Level 4 (providing their own cases) or do a combination of the two.

## **Level 4:**

Independent sole mediator – the intern is working with their own cases and the mentor may or may not be in the mediation session but works with the intern preparing for the session, reviews documents, and debriefs.

## **Post–program consultation**

After interns have completed the program and begun their own practice, they may contact their former mentor for one hour of free consultation. Any consultation after that will be at whatever private rate is set by the mentor.

## **The Orion Experience:**

An intern who has recently been trained and has very little experience or practice hours might expect an intern experience something like the following: (case hours are based on an estimated average of 1.5 hours per session and 2 sessions per case)

- Level 1: 1 - 2 cases (3 - 6 hours) – observe, assist, (does not count toward VFCMP hours)
- Level 2: 1 - 3 cases (3 – 9 hours) – second chair mediator (not count for VFCMP)
- Level 3: 2 – 8 cases (6 – 30 hours) – co-mediator (counts for VFCMP)
- Level 4: 3 – 8 cases (9 - 24 hours) – primary or solo mediator (counts for VFCMP)
- 8 - 10 hours – debriefing, coaching before and after mediation sessions
- 6 – 8 hours – document review, revision and commentary

Approximate minimum hours in program – 33 hours of paid mentor time if all 30 VFCMP qualifying hours are to be gained through the program.

## **COST OF THE PROGRAM:**

**The cost is \$75 per hour** – this includes all contact time with clients (on the mentor's cases), debriefing, document review, and other consultation hours as requested/needed. There is not a charge for the additional benefits, listed in the next section.

**Total estimated minimum cost** - \$2475 (payable in installments). Hours that exceed the estimated minimum will continue to be paid at the \$75 per hour rate.

## **Additional benefits for interns:**

- Case reviews on a quarterly basis – open to all interns in the program (free benefit of the program)
- case review phone calls monthly – open to all interns (free benefit of the program)

Note: benefits are available to interns so long as they are actively engaged in the program.

## **Program guidelines:**

1. While the intern program does not guarantee competence or quality of the work of any intern who has finished the program, it does verify that the intern has progressed from one phase of the program to the next based upon the mentor's assessment of the intern's professional abilities.
2. Interns need to understand that availability of cases varies and therefore mentors cannot guarantee that interns are fully booked up with cases at any given time.
3. The estimated time for the program is six to twelve months.
4. Mentors will not take anyone into the program that has not already had divorce mediation training, met at least 75% of their training requirements. Additionally, mentors have the option to require that an applicant has at least ten hours practice time in the mediator's chair (role play or working with actual clients).
5. The intern or the mentor may terminate the intern/mentor relationship for any reason and receive a letter from the mentor stating the number of hours that the intern has worked with them and whether those hours qualified for VFCMP. The intern will receive a full reimbursement for any unused pre-payment.

6. Any intern completing the program (as defined by the mentor) will receive a certificate for a professional internship training program indicating the full number of hours which count toward qualifying for VFCMP or ACR Practitioner status working as a solo, primary, or co-mediator with the mentor.
7. Interns, if at all possible, will have the opportunity to work with two or more mediations that extend over several sessions.
8. Each intern is expected to be able to generate MOUs that are of a high enough professional quality so as to be submitted to the court.
9. While interns are ordinarily not required to attend the monthly phone call meetings or quarterly meetings, a mentor may require it of a particular intern to support their work.
10. Mentors have an ethical requirement to give interns full and frank feedback about their work and professional demeanor. Mentors will share with their interns, the mentor's assessment of the intern's possibilities for success in the field.
11. When possible, the intern may have the opportunity to work with a different mentor for a case. This would only take place in Level 3 or 4 and would be arranged by the primary mentor.
12. The intern may request that they move to a different primary mentor. In that instance, they always have the option to terminate with their current mentor. If the intern wants another mentor, there are no guarantees that they will be accepted by another mentor who may have a waiting list. The new mentor will have a right to speak with any previous program mentors in order to determine whether they wish to accept the intern.
13. If an intern does not take a case for six weeks or refuses or cannot attend more than three mediation sessions in a row, the mentor may return the intern's unused money and remove them from mentoring in order to free time for other interns. The removed intern may come back to the mentor based on mutual agreement and the mentor's available time.
14. Payment for the program is always in advance of work and is ordinarily in four payments.
15. The services have already been deeply discounted and fees will not be reduced further.

## **Program mentors**

**Phoebe Barash - phoebe@barashmediation.com 802-453-7815**

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**Orion is an independent collaborative, not part of any organization other than North Star.**