

*Let's talk about...*

# Conflict Mediation

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Your guide to using  
Mainstay Housing's Conflict  
Mediation Services



## Building A Stronger Community

Mainstay provides, promotes, and supports quality affordable and accessible housing primarily for consumer/survivors, as well as people with special needs.

### Our vision:

Everyone has quality, affordable housing!

### Our values:

Each individual has a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Mainstay values an environment that is caring, open, trusting and accepting. Diversity of people, perspectives, cultures, skills and other areas is celebrated.

Mainstay values open and honest communication and access to information, as important cornerstones in creating unity of purpose as well as empowered tenant members and staff.

Tenant member's feedback and participation in matters that affect them are critical in Mainstay's ability to provide good quality affordable housing.

Mainstay is committed to social justice as a philosophy that guides our activities.



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## Why this booklet:

Conflict is a natural part of life. People have differences, and these differences are bound to create conflict.

To help tenant members resolve conflicts among themselves, Mainstay Housing tenants and staff developed a conflict mediation policy and procedure. They also set up a Conflict Mediation Committee with six members: two tenants, two Supportive Housing Workers, and two people from Mainstay's partner agencies

The committee's goals are to:

- Provide tenant members with tools and skills to resolve individual and community conflicts
- Help tenant members to keep their housing
- Build healthier communities through increased awareness of sources of conflict and finding ways to resolve them
- Promote recovery.

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## An overview:

# How conflict mediation works at Mainstay

## Conflict Mediation is...

... a process where two or more people come together to resolve their differences in a fair and impartial manner. Conflict mediation can help to negotiate a win-win solution for all parties involved.



## Mainstay's Conflict Mediation Service is...

... an opportunity to discuss and resolve conflicts with a negotiation team of three people: one tenant, one Supportive Housing Worker (SHW), and one person from a partner agency. All team members are on the Conflict Mediation Committee and have received mediation training.

No-one on the team can work or live in the same building as the tenants involved in the conflict.

## Here's how it works:

- 1 If you have a conflict with another tenant, first try to work it out yourselves.
- 2 If you cannot reach an agreement you both can live with, ask your Supportive Housing Worker (SHW) to set up a mediation meeting.
- 3 Your SHW will contact the Conflict Mediation Committee and ask it to set up a meeting with a 3-member Negotiation Team, yourself, and the other tenant involved in the conflict
- 4 At the meeting, each tenant will have a chance to listen, and to be heard. Once all parties have had a chance to present and discuss the issues, the team will help them reach an agreement.
- 5 At the end of the meeting, the agreement will be put in writing and both tenants will sign it. The SHW will then help both tenants to uphold their side of the agreement.

**All details of the mediation will be kept confidential.**

## The details:

### When should you use the Conflict Mediation Service?

Tenants are encouraged to the mediation service when they have made every effort to resolve the conflict on their own, but have not been able to reach an agreement.

Here are some examples:

**Sandra and Robert** are next door neighbors. For the past month some other tenants have been telling Robert that Sandra has been gossiping about him. Robert approached Sandra in the laundry room to ask why she had been talking about him. Sandra said it was because she had heard Robert has been disrespectful to women in the building. Robert denied he

had been disrespectful, and asked Sandra to stop the gossip. Sandra then posted a very negative letter on the elevator door. *Time for mediation.*

**Jason and Tammy** are neighbors. Tammy plays music really loudly every weekend until 2 am. So Jason has banged on her door, disturbing other neighbours on the floor. The police have been called. Jason has tried to talk to Tammy, but she refuses to discuss it. He has also written her a letter. *Jason asked his SHW to set up mediation.*

**David** has many guests visiting his unit. Several of his guests have stayed for over a month, causing disturbances in the lobby and common room. Darlene lives above David. She has been disturbed by the noise from David's unit, and has been banging on her floor to get David and his guests to be quiet. Darlene has also spoken to David to remind him of Mainstay's Guest Policy. David told Darlene to mind her own business. *Darlene asked her SHW to arrange mediation.*

### How do I start the process?

Talk to your Supportive Housing Worker. Your SHW will give you a Complaint Form/Request for Mediation. Complete this form and return it to the SHW. The SHW will then arrange a mediation meeting.



### What happens at the mediation meeting?

Each tenant will have a chance to talk about the conflict with the help of the negotiation team. The team will ask questions to help identify the key issues, and make sure they are clear to everyone.

The team will help the tenants involved in the conflict find creative ways to solve the conflict. If both tenants come to an agreement, the team will put that agreement in writing. Both tenants will then sign the agreement. This agreement is not a legally-binding document.

### Where are mediation meetings held?

All mediation meetings are held at Mainstay's head office at 761 Queen Street West, 3rd Floor.

### How long will the meeting last?

Set aside at least 2 – 3 hours.  
A second meeting can be arranged if more time is needed.



### Can I bring anyone to the meeting?

Yes. You are encouraged to bring supports such as your support worker, family member, friend.

We ask that you do not invite other tenants from the building, except those directly involved in the conflict.

### What happens after the mediation meeting?

Hold up your side of the agreement with the support of your Supportive Housing Worker. The agreement can be revisited if it's not working. Talk to your SHW.

### Is Mainstay's Mediation Service a legal process?

No. It is a service to help Mainstay tenants resolve conflicts. It is not part of the mediation process used by the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board.

### Is it confidential?

YES. Mainstay Housing and its staff will not discuss your mediation with anyone inside or outside your building.

# Mediation Tips

- Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view. You do not have to agree. But it is important to understand what they think or feel, and why they think or feel the way they do.
- Do not assume the worst. Most of the time we cannot accurately predict what the other person really intended.
- Avoid placing blame on the other person for the problem. Blaming just makes other people defensive.
- Apologize. It does not matter if what you did was intentional or not. An apology goes a long way in restoring a relationship.
- Focus on what the other person is saying to you. Listen with both ears. When it is time for you to respond, think quietly for a minute until you know what you want to say. Do not blurt out a response without thinking.
- Use active listening and "I messages" that allow you to express your feelings without directly attacking the other person.
- Respect others. Disrespect is the quickest route to an argument.
- Explore each others' interests. Often we find that people in conflict have common interests and concerns
- Shift the conversation away from the issue. Sometimes confrontation can make others uncomfortable.
- Ask what the other person thinks is most important, and what outcomes they want to see from the discussion.

# Emergency Contact Numbers

| Name  | Phone Number  |
|---|---|
| Bell Relay Service  | 1.800.855.0511  |
| Co-op Taxi  | 416.504.2667  |
| Crime Stoppers  | 1.800.565.8603<br>TTY: 416.467.0493                         |
| Distress Centre   | 416.598.1121 or<br>416.486.1456<br>TTY: 416.408.0007        |
| Fire Department   | 911<br>TTY: Call Bell Relay Service –<br>they will call 911 |
| Food Share — Toronto Hunger Hotline   | 416.392.6655<br>TTY: 416.392.3778                           |
| Mainstay Housing after hours Emergency                                      | 416-339-1024  |
| Mainstay Head Office  | 416-703-9266<br>TTY: 416-703-9267                           |
| Poison Information  | 416.813.5900<br>TTY: 416.597.0215<br>and 1.877.750.2233     |
| Police  | 911<br>TTY: Call Bell Relay Service –<br>they will call 911 |
| Toronto Police Dept. – non-emergency  | 416.808.2222<br>TTY:416.467.0493                            |
| 211 – Resource Line   | TTY: 416.392.3778   |
| Ontario Interpreter Services<br>(after hours emergency interpreter service) | 1-866-256-5142<br>TTY: 1-866-831-4657                       |