



# UCSF OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

## Mediation Services

### *What is mediation?*

Mediation is a process in which two or more individuals who are part of the UCSF community voluntarily come together with a neutral third-party to resolve a conflict or dispute, or to reach an understanding or agreement.

### *Why use mediation?*

Generally, no one enjoys conflict – although it is a fact of life. The challenge for all of us is to find solutions to conflict and thus maintain a productive and satisfying workplace environment. Mediation helps address this challenge by providing a structured process that enables participants to work together to overcome obstacles and change negative patterns of communication.

The assistance of an impartial mediator also serves to relieve the burden and stress of conflict for those involved, which in turn is a first step in making it possible for the participants to develop their own resolution.

### *When should you consider mediation?*

Consider mediation as early in the development of conflict as possible, regardless of whether those involved have made any attempt to address the current (or pre-existing) conflict. When conflict can be resolved at the lowest level it benefits everyone.

Situations which may benefit from mediation include the following:

- Two people in a reporting relationship have different expectations to meet the job requirements.
- A team member experiences a lack of respect or recognition for their contribution, including authorship issues, team-developed products, or input to the work environment.
- Two colleagues do everything differently, do not understand how the other way can work, and feel the tension escalating.
- An employee has concerns about how they are being treated.

### *How does mediation work?*

Mediation involves two or more individuals (any members of the UCSF community) who voluntarily come together with a neutral third-party to resolve a conflict or dispute by reaching an understanding or agreement.

*“The safety, rules and protection of mediation led to extremely useful disclosures that totally changed the misunderstanding.”* (Staff member)

The University of California, San Francisco is committed to providing individuals with a safe, neutral process for the resolution of conflict. The Office of the Ombuds offers mediation and other services for conflict prevention and resolution.

- Mediation invites people to assess their opinions realistically, and also understand opposing perspectives. It provides an opportunity for productive communication and offers participants an excellent chance for reaching resolution on terms they can accept.
- The involvement of a neutral third party helps to relieve the stress and weight of the conflict. Ombuds are skilled in a structured process that helps people to listen and hear, and become active participants in finding acceptable outcomes.
- Mediation is not an adversarial process and does not focus on judgments of right and wrong. The process relieves defensiveness and provides incentives for participants to find workable solutions.

### *Who has used mediation at UCSF and why?*

Faculty, staff, students and administrators have used mediation with satisfying results, often changing a negative dynamic in one or two mediation sessions.

- In 2016-2017, visits were from Staff (37%), Managers and Supervisors (26%), Faculty (25%), Trainees (6%), and Students (5%).
- Communication (or lack thereof) was a critical factor for most of those requesting mediation; perceived deficiencies in respect and treatment were the most cited visitor concerns.

### *How do you start mediation?*

Any individual may confidentially call the Office of the Ombuds at any point in a conflict or difficult situation. Individuals may call as an initial starting point when they are not sure what to do, or may initiate a call on behalf of a group (i.e., a manager interested in a group facilitation or training).

In order to protect confidentiality, the Office of the Ombuds prefers to conduct business in person or by phone rather than e-mail as electronic communications are not always private.

To make an appointment, please call us at (415) 502-9600 or visit us at 3333 California Street, Suite 309 (Laurel Heights).

For more information, please call the main line for the Office of the Ombuds at **415.502.9600**