

OEAP Launches The New Employee Mediation Workplace Pilot Program

Sometimes, no matter how we try to avoid it, a conflict with a supervisor or another employee affects our ability to perform our jobs. We have all experienced the frustration of applying all of our conflict-resolution skills to a dispute only to find that the problem remains.

The Ohio Employee Assistance Program (OEAP) is offering a new mediation service to improve the work environments for all State of Ohio employees by resolving workplace conflicts as soon as they arise. By participating in the OEAP Employee Workplace Mediation Program, if you are involved in a disagreement or dispute with a supervisor or a co-worker, you will be able to request to have the issue(s) addressed through the mediation process.

The Employee Workplace Mediation Program will be available to all permanent State of Ohio employees (full-time and part-time), who are experiencing workplace conflict. This is an informal alternative to address interpersonal workplace disputes. The Transformative Mediation approach will be used in mediation cases with participating parties.

What is Transformative Mediation?

Transformative Mediation is a conversation driven by the parties to address a disagreement. The process encourages the disputing parties to openly discuss issues in a safe environment. A mediator is there to listen and facilitate conversation(s) that help parties to reach their own desired solution or outcome. While the goal is to arrive at a mutually agreed-upon conclusion, this does not always happen; however, mediation does offer a forum to bring concerns out into the open and to explore possible solutions.

OEAP announced the Employee Workplace Mediation Program on June 3, 2014 during the 2014 OEAP Annual Resource Conference. Dr. Joseph Folger, co-founder and designer of the Transformative Mediation approach was the keynote speaker. He explained the Transformative Mediation approach to agency EAP Coordinators, managers, human resources, labor relations and union representatives, and discussed how the approach has been applied in other organizations.



Joseph Folger, Ph.D. (left) participated in the 2014 OEAP Annual Resource Conference in June with Michelle Zaremba (Dayton Mediation Center) as well as Tony Bonofiglio, Debora Branham and Roderick Cheatham of the State of Ohio.

Is Mediation a Voluntary, Confidential Process?

Mediation is completely voluntary and as binding as both parties decide they want it to be. If issues remain after mediation has been tried, OEAP offers additional resources to State of Ohio employees involved in a dispute.

Your conversation will be considered confidential unless you and the other person agree to disclose portions/or all of its contents.

What Agencies will be Involved in the Pilot Mediation Program?

On July 1, 2014, the Employee Workplace Mediation Pilot Program was launched with five (5) participating agencies (COM, EPA, DAS, DYS and JFS). The pilot program will conclude on November 28, 2014. State employees were interviewed and selected to serve as volunteer mediators based on required criteria

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(statewide competencies and mediator qualifications). All mediators participating in the pilot have been trained in the Transformative Mediation approach and will be ready to mediate cases received from the five pilot agencies. The program is expected to be fully implemented statewide during the first quarter of 2015.

More Information Will be Coming About the Workplace Mediation Program

As the five agencies (COM, EPA, DAS, DYS and JFS) complete the pilot program, more information will be provided about the new Employee Workplace Mediation Program. If you have general questions, contact the OEAP at 800-221-6327 or 614-644-8545 or use the confidential mail at OEAP@das.ohio.gov.

Tips for More Rewarding Parent-Child Relationships

Parenting has always been a challenging job, but it used to seem like a simple recipe. Start with one working father. Add a stay-at-home mother, then mix in some kids.

Today, raising kids is more complicated, with a variety of possible living situations. Just 23 percent of married-couple families in the U.S. with children younger than age 15 had a stay-at-home mother.

Research shows that 27 percent of children younger than age 18 lived with one parent, and four percent with no parents. Behind each of these statistics are unique families where parents are working hard to build a rewarding relationship with their children and help their children thrive. Balancing work and family is often part of the equation and maybe even balancing care for an aging parent at the same time. Single parents and those with blended families face additional challenges.

It all adds up to a tougher job than ever before for parents, and children's needs (rather than parental expectations) often set the tone for family life. The problem with this scenario; however, is that children find it difficult to thrive without clear parental expectations and support. Children lacking adequate structure, support and discipline may exhibit problem behaviors or poor academic performance.



Remember the Fundamentals

Remember, the goal of parenting is to communicate clear expectations, so you minimize day-to-day power struggles. Children thrive when their days are structured and predictable. The more they know what's expected of them, including when and how to satisfy those expectations, the more consistent their behavior will be.

Pay Attention

Take the time to know the "who, what, when and where" of your children's lives. Pay attention to your children and try to figure out what makes them tick. Encourage them to talk about what they think and feel, while remembering how it felt to be their age yourself. Actively listen to them and respond by telling them what you have heard them say. Treat them with respect. Be accepting and consistent.

Stressor Warning Signs for Parents

Once children start having problems, it's not uncommon for parents to begin to disagree with each other. The stress of this marital conflict further undermines parents' effectiveness. Take the time to pay attention to physical, emotional and behavioral signs that may signal you're feeling stressed. Some of the symptoms of stress include:

Physical

- Sleep disturbances;
- Back, shoulder, neck or jaw pain;
- Tension or migraine headaches;
- Digestive distress;
- Fatigue;
- High blood pressure; and
- Irregular heartbeat or palpitations.

Emotional

- Depression, moodiness;
- Nervousness, anxiety;
- Irritability, frustration;
- Memory problems;
- Lack of concentration;
- Feeling out of control; and
- Overreactions.

Nine Steps to More Effective Parenting

Here are some ways to tackle your child-rearing responsibilities that will help you feel more fulfilled as a parent, and enjoy your children more, too.

1. Nurture Your Child's Self-Esteem. Choose your words carefully and be compassionate. Let your child know that everyone makes mistakes and that you still love him or her, even when you don't love the behavior.

2. Catch Your Child Being Good. Make a point of finding something to praise every day. Be generous with rewards — your love, hugs and compliments can work wonders and are often reward enough.

3. Set Limits and Be Consistent with Your Discipline. A common mistake parents make is failure to follow through with consequences when rules are broken. Being consistent teaches your child what you expect.

4. Make Time for Your Children. Many parents find it mutually rewarding to have prescheduled time with their child on a regular basis or look for other ways to connect with their child.

5. Be a Good Role Model. Be constantly aware that you're being observed by your children. Model the traits you wish to cultivate in your child. Treat your children the way you expect other people to treat you.

6. Make Communication a Priority. Children want and deserve explanations. Children who participate in decisions are more motivated to carry them out.

7. Be Flexible and Willing to Adjust Your Parenting Style. As your child changes, you will gradually have to change your parenting style. What works with your child now won't work as well in a year or two.

8. Show that Your Love Is Unconditional. Avoid blaming, criticizing, or fault-finding. Instead, strive to nurture and encourage even when you are disciplining

your child. Make sure he or she knows that although you expect better next time, the love for your child is the same.



9. Be Aware of Your Own Needs and Limitations as a Parent. Try to have realistic expectations for yourself, your spouse and your children. Take time out from parenting to do things that will make you happy as a person (or as a couple). Focusing on your needs doesn't make you selfish. It simply means you care about your own well-being, which is another important value to model for your children.

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Family Disaster Preparedness

Preparing in advance and having a plan for when disaster strikes can help reduce your level of stress and anxiety if it actually happens. Take some time to think about important and necessary items in your daily life and be prepared by creating an emergency kit that includes food, water and first aid items.

Natural and/or planned disasters usually happen without warning. And while no amount of preparation can take

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care of every possibility, knowing what to do is your best protection. Consider the following procedures, as recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), when creating your family disaster plan and supplies kit.

Planning Steps

Create a disaster plan

- Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, earthquakes and other events to children. Share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet: 1) Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire; 2) Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Make sure everyone knows the address and phone number.



- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Have all family members call this person and tell them where they are.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.
- Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main and natural gas main. Learn how and when to turn these utilities off. Teach all responsible family members. Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves.

Practice and maintain your plan

- Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.
- Routinely check that items, such as bookshelves, are secure.

If Disaster Strikes

- Remain calm and patient and put your plan into action.
- Check for injuries, give first aid and obtain help for seriously injured people.
- Check for damage in your home:
 - Use flashlights — do not light matches or turn on electrical switches, if you suspect damage;
 - Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards;
 - Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly; and
 - Call your family contact — do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.

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Emergency Supplies

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as duffel bags or covered trash containers. Include:

- One gallon of water per person per day (for drinking and food preparation/sanitation);
- At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight. Include a can opener;
- One change of clothing and sturdy footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person;
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications;
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries;
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks;
- Sanitation supplies;
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members;
- An extra pair of glasses; and
- Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

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**OHIO EMPLOYEE
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Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems

and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won't get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don't know if it's burnout, loss of motivation, depression or all three? Late for work too often? Has use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line, never wonder if your concern is appropriate to contact OEAP. So, if you've been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give OEAP a call today.

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