

*You  
Don't  
Have to  
Sue*

Here Are Some Other Ways



to Resolve a Civil Dispute

Presented by the  
Judicial Council of California  
and the  
State Bar of California

## Introduction

Did you know that most civil lawsuits settle without a trial?

And did you know that there are a number of ways to resolve civil disputes without having to sue somebody?

These alternatives to a lawsuit are known as alternative dispute resolution (ADR). The most common forms of ADR are mediation, arbitration, and case evaluation. There are a number of other kinds of ADR as well.

In ADR, trained, impartial persons decide disputes or help parties decide disputes themselves. These persons are called neutrals. For example, in mediation, the neutral is the mediator. Neutrals normally are chosen by the disputing parties or by the court. Neutrals can help parties resolve disputes without having to go to court.

ADR is not new. ADR is available in many communities, through dispute resolution programs and private neutrals.

## Advantages of ADR

ADR can have a number of advantages over a lawsuit.

- **ADR can be speedier.** A dispute often can be resolved in a matter of months, even weeks, through ADR, while a lawsuit can take years.
- **ADR can save money.** Court costs, attorneys fees, and expert fees can be saved.
- **ADR can permit more participation.** The parties may have more chances to tell their side of the story than in court and may have more control over the outcome.

- **ADR can be flexible.** The parties can choose the ADR process that is best for them. For example, in mediation the parties may decide how to resolve their dispute.
- **ADR can be cooperative.** This means that the parties having a dispute may work together with the neutral to resolve the dispute and agree to a remedy that makes sense to them, rather than work against each other.
- **ADR can reduce stress.** There are fewer, if any, court appearances. And because ADR can be speedier, and save money, and because the parties are normally cooperative, ADR is easier on the nerves. The parties don't have a lawsuit hanging over their heads for years.
- **ADR can be more satisfying.** For all the above reasons, many people have reported a high degree of satisfaction with ADR.

Because of these advantages, many parties choose ADR to resolve a dispute, instead of filing a lawsuit. Even when a lawsuit has been filed, the court can refer the dispute to a neutral before the parties' positions harden and the lawsuit becomes costly. ADR has been used to resolve disputes even after a trial, when the result is appealed.

## **Disadvantages of ADR**

ADR may not be suitable for every dispute.

- If ADR is binding, the parties normally give up most court protections, including a decision by a judge or jury under formal rules of evidence and procedure, and review for legal error by an appellate court.
- There generally is less opportunity to find out about the other side's case with ADR than with litigation. ADR may not be

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effective if it takes place before the parties have sufficient information to resolve the dispute.

- The neutral may charge a fee for his or her services.
- If a dispute is not resolved through ADR, the parties may have to put time and money into both ADR and a lawsuit.
- Lawsuits must be brought within specified periods of time, known as statutes of limitation. Parties must be careful not to let a statute of limitations run out while a dispute is in an ADR process.

### **Three Common Types of ADR**

This pamphlet describes the forms of ADR most often found in the California state courts and discusses when each may be right for a dispute.

- **MEDIATION**

In mediation, a neutral (the mediator) assists the parties in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution of their dispute. Unlike lawsuits or some other types of ADR, the mediator does not decide how the dispute is to be resolved. The parties do.

Mediation is a cooperative process, in which the parties work together toward a resolution that tries to meet everyone's interests, instead of working against each other, where at least one party loses. Mediation normally leads to better relations between the parties and to resolutions that hold up. For example, mediation has been very successful in family disputes, particularly with child custody and visitation.

Mediation is particularly effective when the parties have a continuing relationship, like neighbors or business people. Media-

tion also is very effective where personal feelings are getting in the way of a resolution. This is because mediation normally gives the parties a chance to let out their feelings and find out how each other sees things.

Mediation may not be a good idea when one party is unwilling to discuss a resolution or when one party has been a victim of the other or cannot have enough bargaining power in the mediation. However, mediation can be successful for victims seeking restitution from offenders. A mediator can meet with the parties separately when there has been violence between them.

#### • **ARBITRATION**

In arbitration, a neutral (the arbitrator) reviews evidence, hears arguments, and makes a decision (award) to resolve the dispute. This is very different from mediation, where the mediator helps the parties reach their own resolution. Arbitration normally is more informal and much speedier and less expensive than a lawsuit. Because of the large number of cases awaiting trial in many courts, a dispute normally can be heard much more quickly by an arbitrator than by a judge. Often a case that may take a week to try in court can be heard by an arbitrator in a matter of hours, because evidence can be submitted by documents (like medical reports and bills and business records), rather than by testimony.

There are two kinds of arbitration in California. Private arbitration, by agreement of the parties involved in the dispute, takes place outside of the courts and, normally, is binding. In most cases "binding" means that the arbitrator's decision (award) is final and there will not be a trial or an appeal of that decision. By contrast, a decision by an arbitrator in a case referred by the courts, known as "judicial arbitration," is not binding, unless the parties agree to be bound. A party who does not like the award may file a request for trial with the court within a specified time. However, if that party does not do better in the trial than in arbitration, he or she may have to pay a penalty.

Arbitration is best for cases where the parties want a decision without the expense of a trial. Arbitration may be better than mediation when the parties have no relationship except for the dispute.

Arbitration may not be a good idea when the parties want to resolve their dispute by themselves, or with the aid of a neutral.

- **CASE EVALUATION**

In case evaluation, a neutral (the evaluator) gives an opinion on the strengths and weaknesses of each party's evidence and arguments, and makes an evaluation of the case. Each party gets a chance to present the case and hear the other side. This may lead to a settlement, or at least help the parties prepare to resolve the dispute later on.

Case evaluation, like mediation, can come early in the dispute and save time and money.

Case evaluation is most effective when someone has an unrealistic view of the dispute or when the only real issue is what the case is worth, or when there are technical or scientific questions to be worked out.

Case evaluation may not be a good idea when it is too soon to tell what the case is worth or when the dispute is about something besides money, like a neighbor playing loud music late at night.

## **Additional Information**

There are several other types of ADR beside mediation, arbitration, and case evaluation. Some of these are conciliation, settlement conferences, fact finding, mini-trials, and summary jury trials. Sometimes parties will try a combination of ADR types. The important thing is to try to find the type or types of ADR that are

most likely to resolve your dispute.

The selection of a neutral is an important decision. There is no legal requirement that the neutral be licensed or hold any particular certificate. However, some programs have established qualification requirements for neutrals. You may wish to inquire about the qualifications of any neutral you are considering.

Agreements reached through ADR normally are put in writing by the neutral and, if the parties wish, may become binding contracts that can be enforced by a judge.

You may wish to seek the advice of an attorney as to your legal rights and other matters relating to the dispute.

## **Whom Do You Call?**

To locate a dispute resolution program or neutral in your community:

- Contact the **California Department of Consumer Affairs, Consumer Information Center**, toll free, 1-800-952-5210, or
- Contact the **local bar association**, or
- Look in the **Yellow Pages** under "Arbitrators" or "Mediators."

There may be a charge for services provided by private arbitrators and mediators.

## NOTICE TO LITIGANTS

### **CIVIL TRIAL DELAY REDUCTION AND ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION REQUIRED PROCEDURES AND TIME LINES**

All civil cases except civil petitions, juvenile proceedings, family law proceedings, probate, guardianship and conservatorship proceedings, and unlawful detainer cases are included in the Superior Court's Civil Trial Delay Reduction Program. Local Rules for the Superior Court of El Dorado County require that you comply with certain procedures and meet certain time lines for these cases. Please see Local Rule 7.12.00 et seq.

Plaintiffs and Cross-Complainant must serve the following documents with the Complaint or Cross-Complaint on all other parties:

- A copy of this Notice to Litigants;
- A copy of the Notice of Case Management Conference;
- A blank Case Management Statement;
- You Don't Have to Sue brochure;

This service must be accomplished and proof of service must be filed within 60 days of the filing of the Complaint or Cross-complaint.

A **CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE** will be held within 120 days of filing of the Complaint. The date and time are indicated on the Notice you received from the Clerk's office when you filed the Complaint. You must file a completed Case Management Statement at least 15 days prior to the Conference.

At the **CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**, the court will assign a Dispute Resolution Conference date, a Mandatory Settlement and Readiness Conference date and a trial date. The court may also assign an Issues Conference date. In lieu of a Dispute Resolution Conference, all parties may elect mediation, binding arbitration or judicial arbitration.

**DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONFERENCES** for personal injury cases will be conducted by two volunteer attorney temporary judges representing the plaintiff and defense bars. For other civil cases, Dispute Resolution Conferences will be conducted by one attorney temporary judge. You may obtain a list of the attorneys on each panel from the Court Administration.

**DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONFERENCES** are conducted as early Mandatory Settlement Conferences pursuant to CRC Rule 3.1380 which requires that trial counsel, parties and persons with full authority to settle personally attend, unless excused by the court, and that no later than 5 court days before the conference, each party file and serve on each other party a Settlement Conference Statement with a good faith settlement proposal.

It is important to review Local Rule 7.12.00 et seq. and El Dorado County's ADR program with your client. It will increase the possibility of your client's case being resolved at an early, less expensive stage. The Superior Court Judges of El Dorado County strongly support the ADR program.



## NOTICE TO LITIGANTS

### **DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONFERENCES REQUIRED PROCEDURES AND TIME LINES**

A **DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONFERENCE** will be held within 60 days of the Case Management Conference, unless the court for good cause shown orders otherwise. You will be notified by mail of the date, location and temporary judge(s) assigned to your case.

**DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONFERENCES** for personal injury cases will be conducted by two attorney temporary judges representing the plaintiff and defense bars, respectively. For other civil cases, they will be conducted by one attorney temporary judge. You may obtain a list of the attorneys on each panel from the ADR Administrator, Laureen Shuttleworth at (530) 621-7629, and the parties may agree on the temporary judge.

**DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONFERENCES** are conducted as early mandatory settlement conferences pursuant to CRC Rule 3.1380 which provides:

1. That trial counsel, parties and persons with full authority to settle the case shall personally attend the conference, unless excused by the court for good cause, and
2. That no later than five court days before the conference, each party shall submit to the court and serve on each party, a Mandatory Settlement Conference Statement containing a good faith settlement demand and an itemization of economic and non-economic damages by each plaintiff and a good faith offer of settlement by each defendant. The Mandatory Statement Conference Statement shall set forth and discuss in detail all facts and law pertinent to the issues of liability and damages involved in the case as to that party.

CRC Rule 2.30 authorizes the court to impose sanctions for failure to comply with the provisions of the rule.

You will be expected to have completed sufficient investigation, discovery and legal research to participate fully and in good faith in the Dispute Resolution Conference. The attorney temporary judge may continue the Dispute Resolution Conference from time to time, and you will be expected to participate in any continued Conference fully and in good faith.

It is important to review Local Rule 7.12.00, et seq., and El Dorado County's ADR Program with your client. It will increase the possibility of your client's case being resolved at an early, less expensive stage. The Superior Court Judges of El Dorado County strongly support the ADR Program.

## NOTICE TO LITIGANTS

### **MANDATORY SETTLEMENT AND READINESS CONFERENCE REQUIRED PROCEDURES AND TIME LINES**

A **MANDATORY SETTLEMENT AND READINESS CONFERENCE (MSRC)** will be held approximately three to four weeks prior to trial. See CRC Rule 3.1380 and Local Rule 7.12.10.

The MSRC will be conducted as a **MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE** pursuant to CRC Rule 3.1380, which provides:

1. That trial counsel, parties and persons with full authority to settle the case shall personally attend the conference, unless excused by the court for good cause shown; and
2. That no later than five court days before the conference, each party shall submit to the court and serve on each party, a Mandatory Settlement Conference Statement containing a good faith settlement demand and an itemization of economic and non-economic damages by each plaintiff and a good faith offer of settlement by each defendant. The Mandatory Settlement Conference Statement shall set forth and discuss in detail all facts and law pertinent to the issues of liability and damages involved in the case as to that party.

The MSRC will also be conducted as a **TRIAL READINESS CONFERENCE** at which all matters that need to be resolved prior to trial, including matters set at in Rule 7.12.09, paragraphs D and E, shall be before the court. In their MSCR Statements, Counsel are to address the following:

1. **Witnesses.** A list identifying all lay and expert witnesses the party intends to call at trial;
2. **Exhibits.** A list identifying all exhibits the party intends to offer at trial.
3. **Jury Instructions.** A jury instructions checklist indicating the BAJI numbers of requested Instructions;
4. **Photographs and Reports.** Each party shall attach to the MSRC Statement copies of relevant documents which may assist the Court in settlement including photographs, diagrams, reports, bills, and contracts.

No later than three days prior to the **MSRC**, the parties are to file and serve Motions in Limine.



PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER:	CASE NUMBER:
DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT:	

4. b. Provide a brief statement of the case, including any damages. *(If personal injury damages are sought, specify the injury and damages claimed, including medical expenses to date [indicate source and amount], estimated future medical expenses, lost earnings to date, and estimated future lost earnings. If equitable relief is sought, describe the nature of the relief.)*

*(If more space is needed, check this box and attach a page designated as Attachment 4b.)*

**5. Jury or nonjury trial**

The party or parties request  a jury trial  a nonjury trial. *(If more than one party, provide the name of each party requesting a jury trial):*

**6. Trial date**

a.  The trial has been set for *(date)*:

b.  No trial date has been set. This case will be ready for trial within 12 months of the date of the filing of the complaint *(if not, explain)*:

c. Dates on which parties or attorneys will not be available for trial *(specify dates and explain reasons for unavailability)*:

**7. Estimated length of trial**

The party or parties estimate that the trial will take *(check one)*:

a.  days *(specify number)*:

b.  hours (short causes) *(specify)*:

**8. Trial representation *(to be answered for each party)***

The party or parties will be represented at trial  by the attorney or party listed in the caption  by the following:

a. Attorney:

b. Firm:

c. Address:

d. Telephone number:

f. Fax number:

e. E-mail address:

g. Party represented:

Additional representation is described in Attachment 8.

**9. Preference**

This case is entitled to preference *(specify code section)*:

**10. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)**

a. **ADR information package.** Please note that different ADR processes are available in different courts and communities; read the ADR information package provided by the court under rule 3.221 for information about the processes available through the court and community programs in this case.

(1) For parties represented by counsel: Counsel  has  has not provided the ADR information package identified in rule 3.221 to the client and reviewed ADR options with the client.

(2) For self-represented parties: Party  has  has not reviewed the ADR information package identified in rule 3.221.

b. **Referral to judicial arbitration or civil action mediation (if available).**

(1)  This matter is subject to mandatory judicial arbitration under Code of Civil Procedure section 1141.11 or to civil action mediation under Code of Civil Procedure section 1775.3 because the amount in controversy does not exceed the statutory limit.

(2)  Plaintiff elects to refer this case to judicial arbitration and agrees to limit recovery to the amount specified in Code of Civil Procedure section 1141.11.

(3)  This case is exempt from judicial arbitration under rule 3.811 of the California Rules of Court or from civil action mediation under Code of Civil Procedure section 1775 et seq. *(specify exemption)*:

PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER: _____ DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT:	CASE NUMBER: _____
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10. c. Indicate the ADR process or processes that the party or parties are willing to participate in, have agreed to participate in, or have already participated in (*check all that apply and provide the specified information*):

	The party or parties completing this form <b>are willing</b> to participate in the following ADR processes ( <i>check all that apply</i> ):	If the party or parties completing this form in the case <b>have agreed</b> to participate in or have already completed an ADR process or processes, indicate the status of the processes ( <i>attach a copy of the parties' ADR stipulation</i> ):
(1) Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Mediation session not yet scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Mediation session scheduled for ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Agreed to complete mediation by ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Mediation completed on ( <i>date</i> ):
(2) Settlement conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Settlement conference not yet scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Settlement conference scheduled for ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Agreed to complete settlement conference by ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Settlement conference completed on ( <i>date</i> ):
(3) Neutral evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral evaluation not yet scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral evaluation scheduled for ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Agreed to complete neutral evaluation by ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral evaluation completed on ( <i>date</i> ):
(4) Nonbinding judicial arbitration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Judicial arbitration not yet scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Judicial arbitration scheduled for ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Agreed to complete judicial arbitration by ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Judicial arbitration completed on ( <i>date</i> ):
(5) Binding private arbitration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Private arbitration not yet scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Private arbitration scheduled for ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Agreed to complete private arbitration by ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Private arbitration completed on ( <i>date</i> ):
(6) Other ( <i>specify</i> ):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ADR session not yet scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> ADR session scheduled for ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> Agreed to complete ADR session by ( <i>date</i> ): <input type="checkbox"/> ADR completed on ( <i>date</i> ):

PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER: _____ DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT: _____	CASE NUMBER: _____
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**11. Insurance**

- a.  Insurance carrier, if any, for party filing this statement (*name*):
- b. Reservation of rights:  Yes  No
- c.  Coverage issues will significantly affect resolution of this case (*explain*):

**12. Jurisdiction**

Indicate any matters that may affect the court's jurisdiction or processing of this case and describe the status.

- Bankruptcy  Other (*specify*):

Status:

**13. Related cases, consolidation, and coordination**

- a.  There are companion, underlying, or related cases.
  - (1) Name of case:
  - (2) Name of court:
  - (3) Case number:
  - (4) Status:

Additional cases are described in Attachment 13a.
- b.  A motion to  consolidate  coordinate will be filed by (*name party*):

**14. Bifurcation**

- The party or parties intend to file a motion for an order bifurcating, severing, or coordinating the following issues or causes of action (*specify moving party, type of motion, and reasons*):

**15. Other motions**

- The party or parties expect to file the following motions before trial (*specify moving party, type of motion, and issues*):

**16. Discovery**

- a.  The party or parties have completed all discovery.
- b.  The following discovery will be completed by the date specified (*describe all anticipated discovery*):

<u>Party</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
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- c.  The following discovery issues, including issues regarding the discovery of electronically stored information, are anticipated (*specify*):

PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER: _____	CASE NUMBER:
DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT:	

17. Economic litigation

- a.  This is a limited civil case (i.e., the amount demanded is \$25,000 or less) and the economic litigation procedures in Code of Civil Procedure sections 90-98 will apply to this case.
- b.  This is a limited civil case and a motion to withdraw the case from the economic litigation procedures or for additional discovery will be filed (if checked, explain specifically why economic litigation procedures relating to discovery or trial should not apply to this case):

18. Other issues

- The party or parties request that the following additional matters be considered or determined at the case management conference (specify):

19. Meet and confer

- a.  The party or parties have met and conferred with all parties on all subjects required by rule 3.724 of the California Rules of Court (if not, explain):
- b. After meeting and conferring as required by rule 3.724 of the California Rules of Court, the parties agree on the following (specify):

20. Total number of pages attached (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

I am completely familiar with this case and will be fully prepared to discuss the status of discovery and alternative dispute resolution, as well as other issues raised by this statement, and will possess the authority to enter into stipulations on these issues at the time of the case management conference, including the written authority of the party where required.

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)

▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
(SIGNATURE OF PARTY OR ATTORNEY)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)

▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
(SIGNATURE OF PARTY OR ATTORNEY)

Additional signatures are attached.