



**Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Social Work and Human Services** edited by Edward Kruk

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## **Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Social Work and the Human Services**

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Edward Kruk, Editor. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997.

The editor describes the effective use of mediation, a collaborative approach to conflict resolution, in a range of human services settings dealing with various problems with different populations. Some of those include power imbalances between disputees. While it is clearly stated that mediation is not appropriate for all disputes, this book provides professionals with examples of effective use across the human services field, and factors to consider when determining its appropriateness for a particular situation.

The book begins by clearly stating the purpose, functions, and core principles of mediation. However, as it describes the mediation process in various situations and with different populations, it illustrates how function and core principles are modified and adapted while purpose remains the same. Also, for each setting, population, and situation, the book identifies factors that make a dispute amendable or inappropriate for mediation, some of the dynamics present, how these dynamics can influence the process, the role of, and the knowledge and skills that a mediator should have. This information can be very helpful in determining which cases to mediate and in selecting a qualified mediator.

The editor targets pervasive conflicts that every human service professional, regardless of field of practice, is likely to encounter. Regarding families, the book contains situations involving step-families, divorce, parent-child, couples, and extend-

ed family. The focus of special populations includes the elderly, people with disabilities, and intercultural conflicts both between minority-majority and minority-minority. Fields of practice include child welfare, health, mental health, education, criminal justice, and social policy. Other areas include mediating workplace harassment complaints and community disputes between residents and between residents and agencies. A strength of the book is the broad scope of mediation it provides through an array of situations demonstrating modification in the mediation process from situation to situation.

Since resolving conflict is common in human services and being a mediator is one of the roles of a social worker, continued education and skill development in this area are needed. With the concern about the decline of conflict resolution skills in our society, it is projected that human services professionals and social workers will deal with increasing numbers and types of conflicts.

Consequently, these professionals will need to continue to develop their proficiency in the use of this process as well as their ability to assess the appropriateness of mediation for specific situations.

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