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NEWS RELEASE

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California Courts Celebrate Mediation Week, March 16–22

New short video vignettes demonstrate mediation “how-to’s”

San Francisco—California trial courts will celebrate Mediation Week next week to educate the public about the availability and benefits of mediation programs and to recognize the people who make these programs successful. The Judicial Council of California has declared the third week in March as Mediation Week to coincide with similar events sponsored by other public agencies and public officials.

New this year are short video vignettes, produced by the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, that demonstrate and provide information to help litigants prepare for mediation and other alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs. A sample of the educational videos, ranging from one to six minutes, are posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/adr/types.htm. To see all seven vignettes, go to www.lasuperiorcourt.org/adr/UI/index.aspx (click on the ADR Information link).

Court ADR programs and self-help centers around the state are collaborating in pilot projects to help self-represented litigants, especially Hispanic and other ethnic communities, learn about and participate in mediation and other ADR programs. The superior courts in San Mateo, San Francisco, and Stanislaus Counties each received special funding from the Administrative Office of the Courts to carry out these pilot projects.

For more information on Mediation Week and ADR, including an updated list of local Mediation Week events, visit the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/adr/index.htm. Information about self-help centers is available at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/lowcost/adr.htm.

(more)

BENEFITS OF MEDIATION

Mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in which a neutral third person helps the parties reach a voluntary resolution of a dispute. Mediation is less formal than traditional court proceedings and helps people resolve civil, family, juvenile matters, and other matters in a less adversarial setting.

The benefits of mediation include:

- It can reduce the time, costs, and stress of litigation.
- It is less formal and easier for parties to understand and participate.
- Parties can express their concerns, including nonlegal concerns.
- Parties work together to reach mutually agreeable solutions, including ones that a court could not order.
- By resolving their own disputes, parties who will have an ongoing relationship can reduce the likelihood of future litigation.

California superior courts increasingly encourage and offer mediation for a broad range of issues and case types.

- All superior courts provide mediation in child custody and visitation disputes.
- Approximately half use mediation to help resolve juvenile dependency proceedings.
- More than a third use mediation to help resolve juvenile delinquency proceedings.
- Approximately half offer mediation to help resolve unlimited and limited civil cases.
- An increasing number of courts offer mediation to help resolve unlawful detainer, small claims, and civil harassment proceedings.
- The California Court of Appeal also offers mediation in four appellate districts.

Studies have shown that court mediation programs save the parties time and money, improve satisfaction with the courts' services, and reduce future disputes and offenses.

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.