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For more information contact Jane Millar at 231.487.1771

Using Zoom for Mediations

Northern Community Mediation (NCM), like many other organizations, is adapting in response to the COVID-19 pandemic so that it can continue offering its services to the citizens of Charlevoix and Emmet counties. In order to do so, NCM is providing clients with three potential alternatives to the traditional face-to-face mediations

As has been the practice in the past, the Case Managers will continue to work with parties over the telephone. This process of conciliation works very well for small claims and landlord/tenant cases, as well as some general civil cases.

With the help of the Case Managers, parties can also make use of e-mail exchanges. This approach is similar to conciliating cases over the phone. The major difference is that the negotiating is done by writing rather than verbally expressing oneself.

The third alternative is proving to be highly effective. By using Zoom, parties are able not only to hear one another, they can also see one another. As in face-to-face mediations, mediators facilitate the process, and that process proceeds as if everyone is actually together in the same room. It truly is a positive, virtual experience.

For obvious reasons, the courts are postponing or delaying many hearings and appearances. By taking advantage of the services being offered by NCM, parties have the opportunity of resolving their differences in a more-timely manner. Anyone interested in taking advantage of this service should contact NCM at 231.487.1771. Although staff is working remotely, voice mail messages are being monitored on a regular basis.

In determining when NCM will return to offering face-to-face encounters, several factors enter into that decision: 1) expertise of medical professionals; 2) mandates from Lansing; 3) guidelines from the State Court Administrative Office and the Office of Dispute Resolution in Lansing; 4) feedback from the courts; 5) input from other local organizations; 6) advice from community leaders; 7) last but certainly not least, the safety, health and well-being of the NCM staff and volunteer mediators.

Northern Community Mediation is a non-profit organization that provides an alternative means of resolving conflict. Trained mediators, who meet with the parties involved in a dispute, facilitate so that the individuals themselves can resolve the conflict

Anyone interested in learning more about Northern Community Mediation should contact Dr. Jane Millar at 231.487.1771.