

Elder Mediation

Guidebook and Frequently Asked Questions

*Information for older people and families navigating
ageing, care and important family decisions*



LINDA DENARO

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Linda Denaro is an Accredited Elder Mediator and Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner (FDRP), Counsellor and Parenting Coordinator. Linda supports individuals and families through complex family and relationship matters. She brings a calm, impartial and collaborative approach to mediation, creating a respectful space for families to have important conversations, consider different perspectives and make practical decisions together.



As an Elder Mediator, Linda works with older people and their families to navigate conversations around future care, living arrangements, changing needs and decision-making. Her approach keeps the older person's wishes and wellbeing at the centre of the process, while helping family members feel heard, reduce tension and work towards practical arrangements that support the family as a whole.

Qualifications:

- Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution Practice, College of Law Australia
- Graduate Diploma of Counselling, University of New England
- Bachelor of Training, Griffith University

Registrations:

- Elder Mediator | Elder Mediation International Network
 - Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner | Attorney-Generals Department
 - Accredited Mediator | AMDRAS, Mediation Institute
 - Counsellor & Clinical Supervisor | ACA Australian Counselling Association (Reg: 10585)
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Frequently Asked Questions

What is Elder Mediation?

Elder Mediation is a specialised form of mediation designed to support older people and their families when decisions, concerns or disagreements arise around ageing and changing family circumstances.

It provides family members with an opportunity to come together in a respectful and supported environment where everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

Rather than deciding who is right or wrong, mediation focuses on understanding what is important to each person, identifying the issues that need to be worked through and exploring practical options together.

Wherever possible, the older person's voice, wishes, dignity and right to participate in decisions affecting their life remain central to the process.

Some topics covered in Family Mediation

Every family situation is different. Elder Mediation may assist with conversations around:

- Future care and support needs
- Advance care directives and future healthcare wishes
- Healthcare and medical decision-making
- Whether to commence an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessment
- Remaining at home, increasing home supports or considering residential aged care
- Changes in care needs following illness, hospitalisation or declining health
- Enduring Powers of Attorney and how decisions will be made
- Financial matters relating to care, accommodation and support
- Family concerns about an older person's safety, independence or wellbeing

Keeping the Older Person at the Centre

An important part of Elder Mediation is ensuring that the older person does not become lost amongst competing family concerns.

The aim is not to make decisions about an older person without them, but wherever possible to support conversations and decision-making with them.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why Consider Elder Mediation?

Families can care deeply about an older person and still have very different views about what is best for them.

One family member may be worried that Mum or Dad is no longer managing safely at home, while another may feel they are coping well and should remain independent for as long as possible. Siblings may disagree about who should provide care, whether additional support is needed, how finances should be managed, or when it may be time to consider alternative living arrangements. These conversations can become even more difficult when there is illness, cognitive decline, increasing care needs or long-standing family tensions.

Elder Mediation provides a supported space for families to talk through concerns, hear each other's perspectives and work towards practical decisions that keep the older person's wishes, dignity and wellbeing at the centre.



Frequently Asked Questions

Elder Mediation Process

Step 1. Online Intake Individual Session

Before mediation begins, Linda meets individually with the older person or people involved and each family member participating in the mediation.

These conversations provide an opportunity to:

- understand the family situation and the concerns of each person
- identify the issues that may need to be discussed
- understand what each person hopes mediation may achieve
- consider the needs, wishes and participation of the older person or people involved
- discuss any safety, communication or accessibility considerations
- determine whether mediation is appropriate

Step 2. Elder Mediation

Linda facilitates the mediation in a structured and respectful way, supporting the older person or people involved and their family members to discuss the issues, hear different perspectives and work through concerns together.

Step 3. Moving Forward

Where the older person or people involved and their family members reach agreement or identify practical next steps, these can, if they wish, be recorded in a written summary and emailed to everyone who attended the mediation.

Depending on the issues involved, family members may choose to seek independent legal, financial, medical, aged-care or other professional advice before making final decisions. Once that advice or updated information has been obtained, families can return for a further mediation session if they wish. This gives everyone the opportunity to come back together, consider the information that has been gathered and work towards decisions that support the older person or people involved, while also recognising the needs and circumstances of other family members.

All Mediation sessions are conducted online by Zoom.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does there need to be a major family conflict before we come to Elder Mediation?

No.

Elder Mediation can be particularly valuable before conflict becomes entrenched. Families may seek mediation because they know an important decision is approaching, communication has become strained or several family members have different ideas about what should happen.

Having a facilitated conversation earlier can make it easier to understand everyone's concerns and develop a plan before circumstances become more difficult.

Does the older person attend the mediation?

Wherever possible and appropriate, the older person is supported to participate in decisions that affect their life.

How this occurs will depend on the individual circumstances, including the older person's wishes, health, communication needs and ability to participate meaningfully. Linda will discuss this during the intake process and consider how the older person's voice can remain central throughout the mediation.

What if the older person has dementia or cognitive changes?

A diagnosis of dementia or cognitive impairment does not automatically mean that an older person cannot participate in mediation.

Capacity can be specific to the particular decision being discussed and may fluctuate. Linda considers each situation individually and may recommend that appropriate professional advice or assessment is obtained where questions about decision-making capacity arise.

The mediation process may also be adapted to support the older person's participation wherever appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if family members strongly disagree?

That is often when having an impartial mediator can be particularly useful. Linda provides structure to the conversation so that each person can explain their concerns while also hearing the perspectives of others.

The aim is not necessarily for everyone to think the same way. Instead, mediation helps identify areas of agreement, clarify where differences remain and explore whether practical arrangements can be reached.

Who can attend mediation?

Elder Mediation may involve the older person, along with their spouse or partner, adult children, siblings, grandchildren, or other significant people involved in their circumstances.

Who attends will depend on the issues being discussed and will be considered as part of the intake process.

Can a support person attend?

In some circumstances, yes.

A support person or another relevant professional may be able to participate where this is appropriate and agreed upon.

This needs to be discussed with Linda before mediation.



Frequently Asked Questions

How do we all meet in mediation?

All intake appointments and Elder Mediation sessions are conducted online via Zoom, allowing family members to participate from wherever they are. This makes mediation more convenient and accessible, particularly when family members live in different locations or are balancing work, caring and other commitments.

Zoom also allows for joint conversations or separate breakout rooms where appropriate, creating a flexible and comfortable environment for everyone involved.

Do we need lawyers?

Not necessarily.

Elder Mediation is focused on facilitating family communication and decision-making rather than providing legal advice.

However, where discussions involve legal rights, property, Enduring Powers of Attorney, guardianship, financial arrangements or other legal matters, participants may benefit from obtaining independent legal advice.

Is Elder Mediation confidential?

Mediation is conducted as a private and confidential process.

Linda will explain confidentiality before the mediation commences and explain the exceptions of confidentiality.

What happens if we cannot reach agreement?

Not every issue needs to be resolved in one mediation.

Sometimes the most valuable outcome is gaining a clearer understanding of everyone's concerns, identifying what further information is needed and agreeing on the next steps.

Families may choose to return for another mediation after obtaining further medical, legal, financial or aged-care information.

Take the Next Step

You do not need to wait until your family reaches crisis point to seek support.

If your family is facing decisions about ageing, future care, changing responsibilities or relationships and conversations have become difficult, Elder Mediation provides a structured and respectful way to talk things through together.

An early conversation can help families understand what matters, consider the options available and develop a collaborative approach towards solutions for the future.

Need more information?

If you are seeking Elder Mediation support and would like to discuss your next steps, please email Linda at

support@lindadenaro.com.au for further information or to enquire about commencing the process.