
Colorado Statutes

Title 13. COURTS AND COURT PROCEDURE

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

Article 22. Age of Competence - Arbitration - Mediation

Part 3. DISPUTE RESOLUTION ACT

Current through 2021 Legislative Session

§ 13-22-301. Short title

This part 3 shall be known and may be cited as the "Dispute Resolution Act".

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-301

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 624, § 1, effective July 1.

§ 13-22-302. Definitions

As used in this part 3, unless the context otherwise requires:

- [\(1\)](#) "Arbitration" means the referral of a dispute to one or more neutral third parties for a decision based on evidence and testimony provided by the disputants.
- [\(1.3\)](#) "Chief justice" means the chief justice of the Colorado supreme court.
- [\(1.7\)](#) "Director" means the director of the office of dispute resolution.
- [\(2\)](#) "Early neutral evaluation" means an early intervention in a lawsuit by a court-appointed evaluator to narrow, eliminate, and simplify issues and assist in case planning and management. Settlement of the case may occur under early neutral evaluation.
- [\(2.1\)](#) "Fact finding" means an investigation of a dispute by a public or private body that examines the issues and facts in a case and may or may not recommend settlement procedures.
- [\(2.3\)](#) "Med-arb" means a process in which parties begin by mediation, and failing settlement, the same neutral third party acts as arbitrator of the remaining issues.
- [\(2.4\)](#) "Mediation" means an intervention in dispute negotiations by a trained neutral third party with the purpose of assisting the parties to reach their own solution.
- [\(2.5\)](#) "Mediation communication" means any oral or written communication prepared or expressed for the purposes of, in the course of, or pursuant to, any mediation services proceeding or dispute resolution program proceeding, including, but not limited to, any memoranda, notes, records, or work product of a mediator, mediation organization, or party; except that a written agreement to enter into a mediation service proceeding or dispute resolution proceeding, or a final written agreement reached as a result of a mediation service proceeding or dispute resolution proceeding, which has been fully executed, is not a mediation communication unless otherwise agreed upon by the parties.
- [\(2.7\)](#) "Mediation organization" means any public or private corporation, partnership, or association which provides mediation services or dispute resolution programs through a mediator or mediators.

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- (3) "Mediation services" or "dispute resolution programs" means a process by which parties involved in a dispute, whether or not an action has been filed in court, agree to enter into one or more settlement discussions with a mediator in order to resolve their dispute.
- (4) "Mediator" means a trained individual who assists disputants to reach a mutually acceptable resolution of their disputes by identifying and evaluating alternatives.
- (4.3) "Mini-trial" means a structured settlement process in which the principals involved meet at a hearing before a neutral advisor to present the merits of each side of the dispute and attempt to formulate a voluntary settlement.
- (4.5) "Multi-door courthouse concepts" means that form of alternative dispute resolution in which the parties select any combination of problem solving methods designed to achieve effective resolution, including, but not limited to, arbitration, early neutral evaluation, med-arb, mini-trials, settlement conference, special masters, and summary jury trials.
- (5) "Office" means the office of dispute resolution.
- (6) "Party" means a mediation participant other than the mediator and may be a person, public officer, corporation, partnership, association, or other organization or entity, either public or private.
- (7) "Settlement conference" means an informal assessment and negotiation session conducted by a legal professional who hears both sides of the case and may advise the parties on the law and precedent relating to the dispute and suggest a settlement.
- (8) "Special master" means a court-appointed magistrate, auditor, or examiner who, subject to specifications and limitations stated in the court order, shall exercise the power to regulate all proceedings in every hearing before such special master, and to do all acts and take all measures necessary or proper for compliance with the court's order.
- (9) "Summary jury trial" means summary presentations in complex cases before a jury empaneled to make findings which may or may not be binding.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-302

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 624, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: (3) amended and (6) added, p. 605, § 1, effective July 1. L. 91: (2.5) and (2.7) added and (3) amended, p. 369, § 1, effective July 1. L. 92: (1) and (2) amended and (1.3), (1.7), (2.1), (2.3), (2.4), (4.3), (4.5), (7), (8), and (9) added, p. 298, § 2, effective June 2.

Case Notes:

ANNOTATION

Law reviews. For article, "Early Neutral Evaluation as a Dispute Resolution Tool in Family Court", see 41 Colo. Law. 37 (May 2012).

"Mediation communications" does not extend to all communications that may be related to the mediation. Mediation communications are limited to those made in the presence or at the behest of the mediator. After a preliminary settlement agreement had been signed following a mediation, negotiations between counsel and statements to the court were not mediation communications required to be kept confidential pursuant to § [13-22-307](#). *Yaekle v. Andrews*, [195 P.3d 1101](#) (Colo. 2008).

Cross References:

For the legislative declaration contained in the 1992 act amending subsections (1) and (2) and enacting subsections (1.3), (1.7), (2.1), (2.3), (2.4), (4.3), (4.5), (7), (8), and (9), see section 1 of chapter 66, Session Laws of Colorado 1992.

§ 13-22-303. Office of dispute resolution - establishment

There is hereby established in the judicial department the office of dispute resolution, the head of which shall be the director of the office of dispute resolution, who shall be appointed by the chief justice of the supreme court and who shall receive such compensation as determined by the chief justice.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-303

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 624, § 1, effective July 1.

§ 13-22-304. Director - assistants

The director shall be an employee of the judicial department and shall be responsible to the chief justice for the administration of the office. The director may be but need not be an attorney and shall be hired on the basis of training and experience in management and mediation. The director, subject to the approval of the chief justice, may appoint such additional employees as deemed necessary for the administration of the office of dispute resolution.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-304

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 625, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: Entire section amended, p. 605, § 2, effective July 1.

§ 13-22-305. Mediation services

- (1) In order to resolve disputes between persons or organizations, dispute resolution programs shall be established or made available in such judicial districts or combinations of such districts as shall be designated by the chief justice of the supreme court, subject to moneys available for such purpose. For all office of dispute resolution programs, the director shall establish rules, regulations, and procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes. Such rules, regulations, and procedures shall be designed to establish a simple nonadversary format for the resolution of disputes by neutral mediators in an informal setting for the purpose of allowing each participant, on a voluntary basis, to define and articulate the participant's particular problem for the possible resolution of such dispute.
- (2) Persons involved in a dispute shall be eligible for the mediation services set forth in this section before or after the filing of an action in either the county or the district court.
- (3) Each party who uses the mediation services or ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution in section [13-22-313](#) of the office of dispute resolution shall pay a fee as prescribed by order of the supreme court. Fees shall be set at a level necessary to cover the reasonable and necessary expenses of operating the program. Any fee may be waived at the discretion of the director. The fees established in this part 3 shall be transmitted to the state treasurer, who shall credit the same to the dispute resolution fund created in section [13-22-310](#).
- (4) All rules, regulations, and procedures established pursuant to this section shall be subject to the approval of the chief justice.
- (5) No adjudication, sanction, or penalty may be made or imposed by any mediator or the director.
- (6) The liability of mediators shall be limited to willful or wanton misconduct.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-305

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 625, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: (1), (2), and (3) amended and (6) added, p. 606, § 3, effective July 1. L. 91: (1), (3), and (6) amended, p. 370, § 2, effective July 1. L. 92: (3) amended, p. 300, § 4, effective June 2.

Cross References:

For the legislative declaration contained in the 1992 act amending subsection (3), see section 1 of chapter 66, Session Laws of Colorado 1992.

§ 13-22-306. Office of dispute resolution programs - mediators

In order to implement the dispute resolution programs described in section [13-22-305](#), the director may contract with mediators or mediation organizations on a case-by-case or service or program basis. Such mediators or mediation

organizations shall be subject to the rules, regulations, procedures, and fees set by the director. The tasks of the mediators or mediation organizations shall be defined by the director. The director may also use qualified volunteers to assist in mediation service or dispute resolution program efforts.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-306

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 625, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: Entire section R&RE, p. 606, § 4, effective July 1. L. 91: Entire section amended, p. 370, § 3, effective July 1.

Case Notes:

ANNOTATION

Law reviews. For article, "Selecting Cases for Mediation", see 17 Colo. Law. 2007 (1988).

§ 13-22-307. Confidentiality

- (1) Dispute resolution meetings may be closed at the discretion of the mediator.
- (2) Any party or the mediator or mediation organization in a mediation service proceeding or a dispute resolution proceeding shall not voluntarily disclose or through discovery or compulsory process be required to disclose any information concerning any mediation communication or any communication provided in confidence to the mediator or a mediation organization, unless and to the extent that:
 - (a) All parties to the dispute resolution proceeding and the mediator consent in writing; or
 - (b) The mediation communication reveals the intent to commit a felony, inflict bodily harm, or threaten the safety of a child under the age of eighteen years; or
 - (c) The mediation communication is required by statute to be made public; or
 - (d) Disclosure of the mediation communication is necessary and relevant to an action alleging willful or wanton misconduct of the mediator or mediation organization.
- (3) Any mediation communication that is disclosed in violation of this section shall not be admitted into evidence in any judicial or administrative proceeding.
- (4) Nothing in this section shall prevent the discovery or admissibility of any evidence that is otherwise discoverable, merely because the evidence was presented in the course of a mediation service proceeding or dispute resolution proceeding.
- (5) Nothing in this section shall prevent the gathering of information for research or educational purposes, or for the purpose of evaluating or monitoring the performance of a mediator, mediation organization, mediation service, or dispute resolution program, so long as the parties or the specific circumstances of the parties' controversy are not identified or identifiable.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-307

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 625, § 1, effective July 1. L. 91: Entire section amended, p. 370, § 4, effective July 1.

Case Notes:

ANNOTATION

"Mediation communications" does not extend to all communications that may be related to the mediation. Mediation communications are limited to those made in the presence or at the behest of the mediator. After a preliminary settlement agreement had been signed following a mediation, negotiations between counsel and statements to the court were not mediation communications required to be kept confidential

pursuant to this section. *Yaekle v. Andrews*, [195 P.3d 1101](#) (Colo. 2008).

Testimony of mediator and attorneys inadmissible to prove existence of a final, unsigned settlement agreement. *GLN Compliance v. Aviation Manual Solutions*, [203 P.3d 595](#) (Colo. App. 2008).

§ 13-22-308. Settlement of disputes

- (1) If the parties involved in a dispute reach a full or partial agreement, the agreement upon request of the parties shall be reduced to writing and approved by the parties and their attorneys, if any. If reduced to writing and signed by the parties, the agreement may be presented to the court by any party or their attorneys, if any, as a stipulation and, if approved by the court, shall be enforceable as an order of the court.
- (2) (Deleted by amendment, L. 91, p. 371, § 5, effective July 1, 1991.)

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-308

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 626, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: Entire section amended, p. 606, § 5, effective July 1. L. 91: Entire section amended, p. 371, § 5, effective July 1.

Case Notes:

ANNOTATION

Oral agreement not enforceable as an order of the court. Alleged oral settlement agreement entered into during private mediation was not enforceable by a court under this section. *Nat'l Union Fire Ins. Co. v. Price*, [78 P.3d 1138](#) (Colo. App. 2003).

In the absence of a signed settlement agreement, agreement entered into during private mediation could not be enforced by court. Agreement unenforceable even if terms of the settlement were read into the record and parties acknowledged that the oral statements constituted the full agreement. *GLN Compliance v. Aviation Manual Solutions*, [203 P.3d 595](#) (Colo. App. 2008).

This section does not control in the context of an agreement to modify parenting time. Because § [14-10-129](#) allows the trial court to modify parenting time whenever doing so would be in the child's best interests, the court did not abuse its discretion in adopting the agreement and modifying the parenting time accordingly despite the fact that the agreement was not reduced to writing or signed. *In re Barker*, [251 P.3d 591](#) (Colo. App. 2010).

This section specifies the requirements for an agreement to become an order of court. This section does not limit the ways by which the parties may form a binding agreement; but § [13-22-307](#) limits the admissibility of some evidence of such an agreement. *Yaekle v. Andrews*, [195 P.3d 1101](#) (Colo. 2008).

§ 13-22-309. Reports. (Repealed)

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-309

History. L. 83: Entire part added, p. 626, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: Entire section amended, p. 606, § 6, effective July 1. L. 92: Entire section amended, p. 301, § 6, effective June 2. L. 98: Entire section repealed, p. 724, § 1, effective May 18.

§ 13-22-310. Dispute resolution fund - creation - source of funds

- (1) There is hereby created in the state treasury a fund to be known as the dispute resolution fund, which fund shall consist of:
- (a) All moneys collected pursuant to section [13-22-305\(3\)](#) ;
 - (b) Any moneys appropriated by the general assembly for credit to the fund; and
 - (c) Any moneys collected by the office from federal grants and other contributions, grants, gifts, bequests, and donations.
- (2) All moneys in the fund shall be subject to annual appropriation by the general assembly. Any moneys not appropriated shall remain in the fund at the end of any fiscal year and shall not revert to the general fund.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-310

History. Amended by [2015 Ch. 259, §29](#), eff. 8/5/2015.

L. 83: Entire part added, p. 626, § 1, effective July 1. L. 88: Entire section R&RE, p. 607, § 7, effective July 1. L. 91: Entire section R&RE, p. 372, § 6, effective July 1. L. 2009: (2) amended, ([SB 09-208](#)), [ch. 149, p. 620, §10](#), effective April 20. L. 2015: (2) amended, (SB 15-264), [ch. 259, p. 949, § 29](#), effective August 5.

§ 13-22-311. Court referral to mediation - duties of mediator

- (1) Any court of record may, in its discretion, refer any case for mediation services or dispute resolution programs, subject to the availability of mediation services or dispute resolution programs; except that the court shall not refer the case to mediation services or dispute resolution programs where one of the parties claims that the party has been the victim of physical or psychological abuse by the other party, at any time and regardless of prior participation, and states that the party is thereby unwilling to enter into mediation services or dispute resolution programs. In addition, the court may exempt from referral any case in which a party files with the court, within five days of a referral order, a motion objecting to mediation and demonstrating compelling reasons why mediation should not be ordered. Compelling reasons may include, but are not limited to, that the costs of mediation would be higher than the requested relief and previous attempts to resolve the issues were not successful. Parties referred to mediation services or dispute resolution programs may select said services or programs from mediators or mediation organizations or from the office of dispute resolution. This section shall not apply in any civil action where injunctive or similar equitable relief is the only remedy sought.
- (2) Upon completion of mediation services or dispute resolution programs, the mediator shall supply to the court, unless counsel for a party is required to do so by local rule or order of the court, a written statement certifying that parties have met with the mediator.
- (3) In the event the mediator and the parties agree and inform the court that the parties are engaging in good faith mediation, any pending hearing in the action filed by the parties shall be continued to a date certain.
- (4) In no event shall a party be denied the right to proceed in court in the action filed because of failure to pay the mediator.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-311

History. Amended by [2021 Ch. 292, §2](#), eff. 6/22/2021.

L. 88: Entire section added, p. 607, § 8, effective July 1. L. 91: (1) and (2) amended, p. 372, § 7, effective July 1. L. 92: Entire section amended, p. 299, § 3, effective June 2.

Case Notes:

ANNOTATION

Law reviews. For article, "Selecting Cases for Mediation", see 17 Colo. Law. 2007 (1988).

Where petitioner files a verified, uncontroverted claim of physical and psychological abuse by husband, the trial court "shall not refer" such a case to mediation; the plain and obvious language of subsection (1) forbids a court from ordering mediation where a party claims physical and psychological abuse. *Pearson v. District Court*, 18th Jud. Dist., 924 P.2d 512 (Colo. 1996).

This section does not require a party to file a declaration of abuse and an unwillingness to participate in mediation prior to the entry of a court order to mediate. *Pearson v. District Court*, 18th Jud. Dist., 924 P.2d 512 (Colo. 1996).

Subsection (1) covers two distinct circumstances: First, it contains a mandatory command that a court "shall not refer" a case to mediation services where a party claims physical or psychological abuse, which requirement has no time limitations. Second, it contains a discretionary "compelling reasons" excusal that is subject to the five-day rule and exists independently of the mandatory excusal for physical or psychological abuse. *Pearson v. District Court*, 18th Jud. Dist., 924 P.2d 512 (Colo. 1996).

Cross References:

§ 13-22-312. Applicability

This part 3 shall apply to all mediation services or dispute resolution programs conducted in this state, whether conducted through the office of dispute resolution or through a mediator or mediation organization.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-312

History. L. 91: Entire section added, p. 373, § 8, effective July 1.

§ 13-22-313. Judicial referral to ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution

- [\(1\)](#) Any court of record, in its discretion, may refer a case to any ancillary form of alternative dispute resolution; except that the court shall not refer the case to any ancillary form of alternative dispute resolution where one of the parties claims that it has been the victim of physical or psychological abuse by the other party and states that it is thereby unwilling to enter into ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution. In addition, the court may exempt from referral any case in which a party files with the court, within five days of a referral order, a motion objecting to ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution and demonstrating compelling reasons why ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution should not be ordered. Compelling reasons may include, but are not limited to, that the costs of ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution would be higher than the requested relief and previous attempts to resolve the issues were not successful. Such forms of alternative dispute resolution may include, but are not limited to: arbitration, early neutral evaluation, med-arb, mini-trial, multi-door courthouse concepts, settlement conference, special master, summary jury trial, or any other form of alternative dispute resolution which the court deems to be an effective method for resolving the dispute in question. Parties and counsel are encouraged to seek the most appropriate forum for the resolution of their dispute. Judges may provide guidance or suggest an appropriate forum. However, nothing in this section shall impinge upon the right of parties to have their dispute tried in a court of law, including trial by jury.
- [\(2\)](#) Ancillary programs may be established, made available, and promoted in any judicial district or combination of districts as designated by the chief judge of the affected district. Rules and regulations for ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution shall be promulgated by the director of the office of dispute resolution.
- [\(3\)](#) All rules, regulations, and procedures established pursuant to this section shall be subject to the approval of the chief justice.
- [\(4\)](#) Nothing in this section shall preclude any court from making a referral to mediation services provided for in this article.
- [\(5\)](#) All referrals under this section shall be made subject to the availability of alternative dispute resolution programs. Parties referred to ancillary forms of alternative dispute resolution may select services offered by the office of dispute resolution or by other individuals or organizations.
- [\(6\)](#) This section shall not apply in any civil action where injunctive or similar equitable relief is the only remedy sought.

Cite as (Casemaker) C.R.S. § 13-22-313

History. L. 92: Entire section added, p. 300, § 5, effective June 2.

Case Notes:

ANNOTATION

This section and § [14-10-128.1](#) are in conflict and cannot be harmonized with respect to the standards for the appointment of a parenting coordinator if abuse by one parent is alleged by the other. Although this section bars the court from referring a case to any ancillary form of alternative dispute resolution if one of the parties claims abuse by the other party, under § [14-10-128.1](#), a mere claim of abuse by one parent is insufficient to bar the appointment of a parenting coordinator. Even documented evidence of domestic violence does not automatically bar such an appointment. Rather, the court is required only to consider the effect of the evidence on the parties' ability to engage in parenting coordination. In re Rozzi, [190 P.3d 815](#) (Colo. App. 2008).

Cross References:

For the legislative declaration contained in the 1992 act enacting this section, see section 1 of chapter 66, Session Laws of Colorado 1992.