

## **MEDIATION AS A TOOL OF RESOLVING SOCIAL CONFLICTS**

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Mediation as a Social Service is gaining increasing popularity due to its effectiveness in resolving conflicts of various nature, ranging from family disputes to interpersonal and societal conflicts. This tool is based on the principles of neutrality, voluntariness, and confidentiality, which allows maintaining relationships between the parties while simultaneously resolving disputes without the need for judicial or administrative intervention. Mediation is considered an effective alternative to court procedures, as it not only reduces the costs of legal procedures but also alleviates the burden on legal institutions, providing citizens with access to quick and constructive conflict resolution [1].

The nature of social mediation lies in the fact that it allows the parties to actively participate in resolving their issues, which helps to consider the interests of both sides and promote mutually beneficial results. This approach makes mediation an essential part of social services, as the outcomes tend to be more widely accepted and implemented than decisions made through formal institutions. As a result, mediation ensures a higher level of sustainability for the agreements reached and reduces the likelihood of the conflict reoccurring [2]. For effective functioning, social mediation requires the creation of appropriate infrastructure for mediators, as well as the development of mechanisms for regulation and coordination with other social services.

The effectiveness of mediation depends on its legal framework and regulation. A clear regulatory base ensures the protection of the rights of participants, organizes the mediation process according to established standards, and sets the norms for choosing mediators, ensuring confidentiality and data security. It is crucial for the legislation to provide flexibility in using mediation without compromising the quality of the results [3]. In such conditions, mediation can act as an effective means of resolving disputes in the social sphere without the involvement of government authorities or judicial bodies.

One of the primary advantages of mediation is its accessibility. It allows citizens to resolve disputes much more quickly and cheaply than through court or other administrative procedures. Mediation helps preserve or restore social connections between the parties, which is particularly important in cases involving family or community conflicts. This becomes critically important in social systems where conflicts can have serious consequences that affect larger social groups. For instance,

in the case of family disputes, mediation can help maintain family relationships and prevent the further breakdown of the family, thus promoting social stability [4]. Mediation is especially beneficial for vulnerable groups of the population, such as minors, pensioners, or persons with disabilities, where the opportunity to resolve conflicts peacefully is an important aspect of social inclusion and support.

Practical models of mediation in the social sector require the presence of a comprehensive infrastructure, which includes not only enhancing the qualifications of mediators but also ensuring proper coordination between various social services [5]. To achieve this, it is necessary to create specialized training programs and certification for mediators, as well as to develop methodological materials for social workers that assist in integrating mediation into the existing system of social services. For example, under the mediation program in social services in the United Kingdom, mediators must undergo specialized training, which includes both theoretical aspects and practical skills in working with vulnerable groups of citizens [6]. The introduction of mediation into various social spheres significantly reduces the costs of resolving disputes, creating a positive effect both for the state and for citizens, and reducing social tensions in society.

However, despite its significant potential, there are certain barriers to integrating mediation into the system of social services [7]. These include a low level of public awareness about the opportunities provided by mediation and a lack of understanding of its benefits. Most people, especially in smaller communities, still perceive judicial processes as the only way to resolve disputes, and alternative mechanisms such as mediation are often underestimated. Additionally, there is insufficient trust in mediators, which may result from the lack of qualification or inconsistent implementation of mediation in practice. To overcome these barriers, it is necessary to implement informational campaigns and training programs that will promote a wider understanding and use of mediation among the population and specialists [7,8].

For the further development of mediation as a social service, it is necessary to not only develop national standards for its provision but also to create a certification system for professionals working in this field [8]. It is also essential to introduce monitoring of the effectiveness of mediation services, which will help improve the quality of mediation and ensure equal access to these services across different regions [1]. Furthermore, to improve the accessibility of mediation, it is necessary to introduce electronic platforms for registration in mediation, which will reduce the costs of providing mediation and ensure greater transparency of the process.

Thus, mediation as a social service has great potential for effectively resolving conflicts of various nature and can become an important tool in modern social systems. Its main advantages are accessibility, speed, low cost, and the ability to preserve social connections between the parties. Mediation contributes not only to conflict resolution but also to strengthening social stability, especially in family, interpersonal, and societal spheres. For its effective implementation, it is necessary to create an appropriate legal and infrastructural framework, ensure the qualification of mediators, and integrate mediation into the system of social services. At the same time, there are certain barriers, such as low public awareness and lack of trust in mediators, which

require active informational campaigns and training programs. In the future, it is important to develop certification for mediators, improve the regulatory framework, and introduce electronic platforms to ensure the accessibility and transparency of mediation services.

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