



# Going to Small Claims Court?

What you should  
know about mediation  
before you file your  
claim or go to Small  
Claims Court.

*Mediation. It Works!*

## What Is Mediation?

Mediation is an alternative method of resolving a dispute and has several advantages over the usual judicial process.

- **You Decide.** Once a judge makes a decision in a Small Claims case, at least one party (and sometimes both parties) leaves unhappy. There is no right of appeal. In mediation, you and the other party, with the help of a mediator, decide the solution. This way, you avoid the risk of “losing” in court or reaching an outcome that is not satisfactory.
- **Customized Solutions.** Even if you “win” your case, the court does not collect the money for you. A mediator can help you develop an agreement that meets the circumstances of your case (including a clear payment plan). The agreement can become a court record and each party will receive a copy.
- **Private.** A court judgment may appear on your credit records, and courts are public places. Mediation offers more privacy.
- **No Cost.** There is no extra charge for cases mediated at the court.
- **A Trial Is Still An Option.** If you are not able to reach an agreement through mediation, you can return to court.

## How Does Mediation Work?

Contested cases on the Small Claims calendar will be referred to mediation. This means that before you present your case to a judge, you must attend a mediation session.

Mediators are available at the court house. If you want to mediate **before** filing a claim, you may contact Kaua‘i Economic Opportunity, Inc., at 245-4077.

- **Who Are The Mediators?**

Mediators are impartial; they help parties explore solutions. Mediators also help develop options. All Small Claims mediators are trained by the Kaua‘i Economic Opportunity, Inc., Mediation Program.

- **Mediating At Court.** After you arrive at court, the judge will briefly explain the Small Claims process. Then the Court Clerk will call each case and instruct parties with contested cases to meet with a mediator. Generally, only the parties named as plaintiff or defendant attend the mediation session.

The mediator may ask you to exchange information (including documents, photographs and materials that support your claim). The mediator will help you work toward a resolution of the claim. The process takes about thirty minutes. Afterward, you return to court.



## What Is Kaua'i Economic Opportunity, Inc?

**Kaua'i Economic Opportunity, Inc., (KEO)** is a private, non-profit organization that helps people resolve conflicts of all types. The Mediation Program uses trained mediators to work with the parties involved in the disputes. KEO has been serving the community since 1965 and has mediated thousands of cases.

The process for mediating a problem or potential small claims dispute at KEO is simple.

- Call **245-4077** and say you would like to mediate a dispute;
- You will need to provide some background information about yourself and the dispute, as well as the names and telephone numbers of others involved;
- A KEO case manager will contact the others and determine if they are willing to mediate (mediation at KEO is voluntary);
- If everyone agrees to mediation, then a meeting will be scheduled at the most convenient time, Monday through Friday (day or evening), or Saturday morning.

## Are There Advantages To Mediating At Kaua‘i Economic Opportunity, Incorporated?

**Yes.** Some advantages you should consider about mediating at Kaua‘i Economic Opportunity, Inc., (KEO) before filing a claim are:

- **Convenience.** Small Claims Court assigns you a date and time to appear. You must wait your turn until your case can be mediated and/or tried. At KEO there is flexibility in picking the time. KEO has mediators available in the day and evening, Monday through Friday, and Saturday morning.
- **Time.** Due to the large number of cases in court, court mediation is usually limited to thirty minutes or less. Mediating at KEO allows you to take the time you feel is necessary. You can come back and “fine tune” the agreement if everyone feels that changes would be helpful. (Also, if you tried mediating at KEO, you do not have to mediate again at court.)
- **Cost.** KEO charges a nominal administrative fee. Small Claims Court requires payment of a filing fee, as well as a charge for having a sheriff “serve” the other party with the complaint (if a sheriff is used).

## How Do I Prepare For Mediation?

**Effective mediation requires two-way communication. This means:**

- Honestly expressing your needs; and
- Listening to what the other party needs.

**The keys to a successful mediation are:**

- Cooperation; and
- Flexibility

**The following suggestions will help you reach a fair agreement:**

- Approach mediation with a positive attitude;
- Be open to new ideas or suggestions;
- Seek agreement, not blame or revenge;
- Look to the future, not the past;
- Express yourself and listen carefully to what others say;
- Help others understand you, and do your best to understand them; and
- Bring all relevant documents.



**Kaua'i Economic Opportunity, Inc.**

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