



# STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY IDENTITY THROUGH ELDER MEDIATION

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# Learning Goals

- To assist you to:
  - Think creatively about addressing the complexities of this specialized field of multi-party mediation
  - Ground your work in the ethical and strategic challenges of elder mediation
  - Enhance your understanding of the current research on aging in Canada
  - Consider the issues of capacity / competency and elder law
  - And more...

# Canada's Aging Population

- Canadian society is changing...aging
- The number of centenarians in Canada has increased 50% between 1996 & 2006
- This number is set to triple to more than 14,000 in 2031

# Canada's Aging Population

- The fastest growing segment of Canadian society is the 85+ cohort
- 1 out of every 4 Canadians will be a senior by 2031
- How does this impact Canadian families?

# Elder Mediation

- What is this specialized form of mediation?
- Elder Mediation is a viable, proactive approach to help families move forward under challenging circumstances

# How Does Elder Mediation Work?

- Elder Mediators specialize in multi-party, multi-issue aspects related to aging
- The focus is on maintaining the identity and values of the family

# Prevention...of Conflict?



## Focus on Prevention

- The Elder Mediator places a great deal of emphasis on preventing the escalation of conflict within families
- Open, transparent, focused conversations facilitate this process



# The Elder Mediator

- “With the knowledge I have now, I would immediately hire an Elder Mediator, a neutral third party trained to de-escalate conflicts and help families resolve complex eldercare issues.” Jacqueline Marcell
- Author of *Elder Rage or Take My Father-Please* and Host of “Coping with Caregiving” radio show

# The Role of the Elder Mediator

- Elder Mediators are trained to:
  - Help families cope with challenging issues related to aging
  - De-escalate conflict
  - Defuse intergenerational rivalry
  - Guide family members towards an action plan

# The Issues in Elder Mediation

- The “sandwich” generation, the 40-50-60 year old Canadians caring for their aging parents welcome the certified Elder Mediator’s assistance with:
  - Safety issues for the older person
  - Care for the caregivers
  - Housing – sale of the family home
  - Financial issues & estate planning
  - Second marriages – conflict
  - Holiday schedules
  - And many more issues...

# The Focus of Elder Mediation

- Strengthens the family identity
- Maintains respectful relationships
- Provides care for the older person & for the family or non-family caregiver
- Promotes the optimum regard for the older person at its centre

# Stability for Families

- The Elder Mediator brings stability to the discussion of how to help when a family receives a diagnosis of dementia
- When a family needs to arrange for caregiving for their loved one



# Stability and Strength

- Help for the caregiver creates stability for the family
- A mediated conversation helps strengthen the identity of the family members

# The Importance of Stability

- Help for the caregiver means stability for the person diagnosed with dementia
  - Keeping the person with dementia at home
  - Assistance with caregiving
  - Honouring the wishes of 93% of Canadians who want to age at home
  - Keeping the person with dementia safe at home in familiar surroundings

# Stability and Strength as Cornerstone

- Promotion of a **circle of care** through an intergenerational conversation with family members
- Discussion of how to involve family members, neighbours, religious affiliations civic groups in this care reinforces the family identity & builds community



## Circle of Care

- Creation of a **circle of care** enables the family to address practical concerns for their loved one
- To reinforce family values
- To strengthen family relationships

# Family Identity

- The principle of **well-being** is highlighted as dementia is a family disease affecting all members of the family
- The family's identity is revitalized as they come together to engage in problem solving for their loved one

# Family Identity

The principle of **prevention** is highlighted by talking about and preparing an action plan with family members

- Working with a certified Elder Mediator opens the door to a future-focused, facilitated conversation for families

# Family Identity

- The focus on the future nurtures and supports the family identity by empowering the participants in the mediated conversation to revitalize already existing relationships

# Effectiveness of Elder Mediation

- Keeps families intact
- Caregivers know best when to seek more assistance for their loved one
- Prevents early institutionalization for the person with dementia & burn out for the caregiver

# Effectiveness of Elder Mediation

- Initiated in 2008 & launched in 2009, the **Respite and Relief Program** was implemented in the Eastern Counties:
- Funded by:
  - Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Champlain Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN)
- Collaborative Team:
  - Alzheimer Association
  - Tri-County Mental Health
  - Champlain Community Care Access Centre (Administrator)

# The Respite & Relief Program

- Designed to empower caregivers to self-direct their respite needs
- Approach: Elder Mediation
  - Specialized education for the mediator - certification
- Goals:
  - Create a circle of care
  - Prevent premature admission to LTCF (dementia client)
  - Prevent hospital visits & or admission for caregiver

# The Respite and Relief Program

- Key functions of Certified Elder Mediator:
  - Abide by Elder Mediation Code of Ethics
  - Use mediation skills to pro-actively achieve goals
  - Foster links between caregiver, client, circle of care & CCAC
  - Assist parties in exploring issues resulting from a diagnosis of dementia
  - Help family members to preserve relationships
  - Empower Senior to remain in their home





# The Future is Now...

- Elder Mediation is needed now
- Canada's aging population urgently requires the professional expertise of certified Elder Mediators



# The Future is Now...

- Families need strong and practical measures to work through conflict
- To preserve relationships



# The Future is Now...

- Elder Mediation renews the family identity by addressing the family's present crisis through effective collaboration
- Elder Mediation safeguards and strengthens family ties
- Elder Mediation is the way of the future now