



# Mediation Defined

If you are a participant in a United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) program in Oklahoma, or if you are involved in Oklahoma agriculture, the **Oklahoma Agriculture Mediation Program** is here to help!

## Who Are We?

The Oklahoma Agriculture Mediation Program (OAMP) is the USDA certified mediation program for the State of Oklahoma. OAMP is a FREE mediation service available to Oklahomans that have a conflict related to agricultural or rural living issues. Mediation is available to agricultural producers, ag lenders, farm and ranch businesses and families throughout the state. Most clients are people who have received an adverse decision from one of the USDA agencies. OAMP is a program of the Institute for Dispute Resolution (IDR) at Oklahoma State University. OAMP services are sponsored by grants from USDA and Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF). The members of the OAMP staff are not employees of the USDA or the ODAFF.

The mediation program has helped agricultural producers and their creditors resolve disputes confidentially in a non-adversarial setting, thus avoiding the traditional process of litigation, appeals, bankruptcy, and foreclosure. This is crucial as America's family farmers continue to deal with a fluctuating economy, low commodity prices, and the consequences of natural disasters.

## What is Mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary, confidential meeting in which a mediator helps individuals involved in a dispute discuss their disagreements, identify options that might resolve the problem, and agree on solutions. A mediator is not a judge and won't render a decision. Instead, any agreements made are based on what the parties themselves mutually agree to.

## An Oklahoma Success Story

Mediation helps resolve many areas of disputes, including farm loans, price support payments, wetland determinations, conservation compliance, and Conservation Reserve Program payment eligibility/limitation. This program has helped many agricultural producers resolve financial problems and stay on their farms. It has proven to be an efficient and effective way to resolve disputes in rural

America. To illustrate:

A producer and spouse had applied for loan servicing to avoid foreclosure after drought and crop loss had significantly reduced their farm income. Prior to the first meeting, OAMP referred the producer for free financial counseling. During mediation, the parties discussed changes the producer could make to the farming operation that would result in a feasible farm plan that cash flowed. They desired to stay in farming, but both husband and wife had come to realize that their operation had become larger than they could manage. The parties were able to devise a plan to reduce the total liabilities by selling some property and assets, while keeping the family home plus sufficient acreage for production of a higher yield crop. The agency was able to develop a feasible farm plan and approved the loan.



## Mediation Works.

There are 36 other USDA certified mediation programs in the nation. At the national level, the mediation program is often lauded by country government officials, community leaders, and newspapers throughout the country for helping producers avoid expensive litigation and bankruptcy. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture stated in its September 2004 policy paper that the mediation program has played a significant role in resolving agricultural credit and other disputes. The mediation program has also received other significant recognition, including a National Association for Rural Mental Health article citing the program's mental health benefits.

## How do I contact OAMP?

OAMP staff will guide you through the mediation process and answer any questions you have about mediation. Contact us at:

**Oklahoma Agriculture Mediation Program**  
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OAMP is a program of the Institute for Dispute Resolution. OAMP is a sponsored program of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the United States Department of Agriculture.