

The Supreme Court of Ohio

Court Improvement Program (CIP) School Attendance Mediation Grant Request for Applications

Open December 8, 2025 to December 31, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Section 1. Overview

The Supreme Court of Ohio (“Court”) is requesting grant applications to support the creation or expansion of school attendance mediation programs designed to reduce absenteeism and prevent children and youth from becoming involved in the child welfare system. These programs aim to address chronic absenteeism through collaboration, non-adversarial approaches that engage students, families, schools, and community partners. Courts will be competitively selected to receive funding through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, administered under the Court Improvement Program (CIP) by the Children and Families Section. This funding opportunity aims to improve coordination between schools, families, and juvenile courts to prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement, reduce truancy-related filings, and promote school engagement and permanency for children and youth.

Section 2. Scope of Grant

Grant funds may be used to establish or expand school attendance mediation programs that bring together families, schools, and community agencies to resolve barriers to regular attendance. Funding may support the payment of mediators to mediate school attendance cases, provide administrative support for scheduling mediations, and assist with the development of referral systems and protocols between schools and juvenile courts. Mediators must be qualified by the Supreme Court to accept mediation cases pursuant to Sup.R. 16.23(A).

Courts may also use funds for outreach and education to increase family awareness of and engagement in mediation services, as well as for data collection and evaluation activities to measure the program’s impact on attendance and educational outcomes (Specialized school attendance mediation training will be provided to mediators by the Supreme Court at no charge.)

In addition, studies have shown that offering a virtual mediation option can significantly increase parental engagement in school attendance cases. Courts may therefore use grant funds to purchase equipment or software needed to support virtual or hybrid mediation services, ensuring that families can participate more easily and consistently.

Each juvenile court may apply for up to \$20,000, with awards made on a reimbursement basis. Matching funds are not required.

Section 3. Period of Grant

The project period begins on or about January 1, 2026, and ends June 30, 2026. All services and activities must be implemented within the grant period. Pending availability of funds, a grant

extension may be considered for projects demonstrating continued need and alignment with program goals.

Section 4. Eligibility

Court of common pleas, juvenile divisions in Ohio are eligible to apply. Funding will be available only for projects directly related to school attendance mediation.

Section 5. Allowable Uses of Funds

Examples of allowable uses include hiring or contracting with mediators, and administrative support for scheduling mediations, supporting program development and evaluation efforts. Funds may also be used to purchase materials, secure space, or implement technology necessary to facilitate mediation sessions. Additionally, courts may use funds for community outreach and education to raise awareness of mediation availability, as well as to cover staff time dedicated to coordinating and tracking mediation referrals and outcomes.

(A) Applicant Requirements

Applicants must provide a complete and clear submission that includes:

1. **Completed Application Form:** All sections of the CIP School Attendance Mediation Grant Application Form must be filled out. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
2. **Project Summary:** A concise (1–2 page) description of the proposed project, including:
 - Purpose and objectives of the project.
 - Target population.
 - Key activities and timeline for implementation.
 - Expected outcomes for the court and participants.
3. **Vendor Quotes (if applicable):** Courts must provide written quotes for any vendor or consultant services included in the application. To ensure cost-effectiveness, courts are encouraged to compare multiple vendors before selecting a provider.
4. **Connection to Grant Goals:** Applicants must indicate which of the following goals are supported by the project:
 - Establish or expand court-based or court-referred school attendance mediation program.
 - Develop a referral system and protocol between schools and juvenile courts, including scheduling mediations.
 - Provide training, consultation, and program development to ensure high-quality mediation practices.
 - Strengthen data collection and evaluation of mediation outcomes.
 - Increase collaboration among families, youth, schools and community agencies to resolve barriers to regular attendance.

- Enhance access and participation through the use of equipment and software that support virtual or hybrid mediation services.

(B) Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be reviewed and scored based on the following weighted criteria (maximum 100 points):

1. **Alignment with CIP Goals and Federal Law (30 points):** Connection to reducing school attendance concerns and improving student educational outcomes.
2. **Need and Clarity of Impact (25 points):** Identification of attendance challenges and how mediation will address them.
3. **Feasibility and Sustainability (25 points):** Clear implementation plan and long-term viability.
4. **Innovation and Replicability (10 points):** Potential to serve as a model for other courts.
5. **Prior Funding Consideration (10 points):** Courts without prior CIP mediation support may receive priority.

(C) Impact Priority Considerations

To strengthen the application, the court should clearly state how project success will be measured. Impact measures should be realistic, measurable, and connected to improved outcomes for children, parents, youth, caregivers, or the court system.

Examples include:

- Increased school attendance rates.
- Reduction in truancy filings.
- Improved collaboration between schools, families, and courts.
- Higher satisfaction reported by families and schools.
- Reduced need for formal court involvement.

Applicants should describe both short-term impacts (e.g., improved collaboration between schools, families, and courts) and long-term impacts (e.g., increased school attendance rates).

Section 6. Terms and Conditions

(A) Rights of the Court

The Court reserves the right to refuse to fund applicants, to propose different funding amounts from the application in appropriate circumstances, and to decline funding any applicants at the Court's discretion.

Furthermore, the Court shall reserve the right to terminate a grant agreement and recoup

any funds that are being misspent by an applicant or not being spent to efficiently complete the applicant's proposal. The Court may conduct site visits or conduct other types of monitoring to observe and evaluate grant programs.

The Court shall reserve the right to audit any recipient court to ensure compliance with the terms set forth in the application or grant agreement.

Lastly, the Court reserves the right to terminate a grant agreement if the Court's CIP funds appropriated for this project expire or fail to continue.

(B) Requirements of Receiving Applicants

Successful applicants must satisfy the following conditions:

1. Execution of a grant agreement between the Court and the receiving court selected for a grant.
2. Submit quarterly reports detailing progress on the project's objectives, implementation activities, and impact measurements.
3. Confirmation that all services and activities made with grant funds have been completed and implemented must be provided to the Court by July 31, 2026.
4. The receiving court shall, upon request, provide any and all activity and financial reports related to the purchase under the grant to the Court.
5. A receiving court shall immediately notify the Court in writing of a decision to decline the grant award.
6. A receiving court shall immediately notify the Court in writing of any changes to the contact information submitted within the application.

(C) Federal Regulations

If awarded, the receiving court shall follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations under the grant award. The recipient court shall familiarize themselves with the Code of Federal Regulations. The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for U.S. Health and Human Services Awards are located under 45 CFR Part 75.

(D) Promotional Materials and News Releases

Successful applicants may be included in future outreach and promotional materials, as determined by the Court. Additionally, news releases and articles released throughout the program period by the Court may include informal updates about the program, as applicable.

Section 7. Submission of Grant Applications and Contact Information

Submit completed applications and vendor quotes no later than **5:00 PM on Friday, December 31, 2025**, to CFC@sc.ohio.gov.

Late applications will not be accepted. Applicants will be notified of the status of their submission in January 2026.

Section 8. Reporting Requirements

(A) General

Receiving courts will provide confirmation of project start-up activities and mediation program implementation to the Court within 30 days after notification of funding award or by February 1, 2026, whichever comes first (extensions may be granted upon request and review of the submitted project plan).

All mediation programs supported by this grant must be operational and providing services by March 1, 2026 (extensions may be granted upon request and review of submitted project plan).

Courts will also be required to submit quarterly progress reports throughout the grant period. Each report must include:

- Number and type of cases referred to school attendance mediation.
- Number of mediation sessions held.
- Mediation outcomes (agreement reached, partial agreement, no agreement).
- Project narrative summary of success, challenges, and lessons learned.

A final cumulative report will be due by July 31, 2026, summarizing program impact and sustainability plans.

(B) Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with reporting requirements or other aspects of the grant agreement could result in the termination of the award and reimbursement of grant funds to the Court.

Section 9. Contact Information

For questions regarding this Request for Applications, please contact:

Linda Topping at Linda.Topping@sc.ohio.gov or 614.387.9389.

Section 10. Applicable Policies

Applicant courts seeking grants from the Supreme Court of Ohio are subject to the Court's policies on Equal Employment Opportunity, Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace, Weapons and Violence Free Workplace, and Discrimination and Harassment. The Court's policies are attached as Appendix A.

Section 11. Attachments

- The Court's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- The Court's Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace Policy
- The Court's Weapons and Violence Free Workplace Policy
- The Court's Discrimination and Harassment Policy

Administrative Policy 5. Equal Employment Opportunity.

This policy is intended to establish consistent standards and expectations regarding the application of all applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations prohibiting discrimination in the workplace to every employee and applicant for a position of employment with the Supreme Court.

(A) Equal Employment Opportunity. The Court is committed to equal employment opportunity for all qualified individuals without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, citizenship, marital status, veteran's status, or non-disqualifying disability and shall engage in employment practices and decisions, including recruitment, hiring, working conditions, compensation, training, promotions, transfers, retention of employment, and other terms, benefits, and privileges of employment that are based upon job-related criteria and qualifications.

(B) Equal Employment Opportunity Plan. The Administrative Director and the Director of Human Resources shall prepare and annually review an equal employment opportunity plan to assure the employment practices and decisions of the Court are consistent with the objectives and requirements of this policy.

(C) Distributions and Postings. Each position description created for a position of employment with the Court pursuant to Adm. P. 15 (Position Management), each position vacancy announcement circulated pursuant to Adm. P. 6 (Employment Process), all requests for proposals, and any other solicitations for employment with or to provide goods and services to the Court shall reference this policy and that the Court is an equal opportunity employer.

(D) Application of Policy. This policy applies to current employees and applicants for positions of employment with the Court.

Effective Date: July 1, 2003

Amended: September 1, 2007

Administrative Policy 22. Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace.

This policy is intended to establish consistent standards and expectations for the development, promotion, and maintenance of a workplace at the Supreme Court that is free from the influence of alcohol and drugs.

(A) Alcohol. The purchase, service, and use of alcohol involve health and safety issues for an employee, and liability risks and public perception concerns for the Court. The Court's policy on alcohol depends on the location and circumstances of an event and the work status of the employee.

(1) Location and circumstances. Generally, alcohol shall not be served or used at a Court sponsored event or at the workplace. In limited circumstances, the Court may allow the service and use of alcohol at a Court sponsored event, including an event at the workplace, but only if alcohol is provided by a properly licensed third party vendor and upon the prior approval of the Administrative Director.

(2) Purchase at Court expense prohibited. Alcohol shall not be purchased at Court expense, regardless of the location or circumstances involved.

(3) Employee on duty. An employee who is on duty shall not purchase, serve, or use alcohol, regardless of the location or circumstances involved.

(4) Employee off duty. An employee who is off duty shall not serve alcohol at a Court sponsored event, regardless of the location or circumstances of the event. An employee who is off duty may purchase and use alcohol at a Court sponsored event approved by the Administrative Director pursuant to paragraph (A)(1) of this policy, including an event at the workplace.

These prohibitions shall be read in conjunction with the requirements and guidance of OJC Reg. 14 (Alcohol; Intoxicating Liquor).

(B) Controlled Substances and Illegal Drugs. An employee shall not unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use a controlled substance or purchase, transfer, use, or possess any illegal drugs or prescription drugs that are illegal, either at the workplace or any other location. A controlled substance includes any drug listed in Section 812, Title 21 U.S. Code and federal regulations adopted pursuant to federal law. This prohibition shall be read in conjunction with the requirements and guidance of OJC Reg. 15 (Controlled Substances).

The Court shall notify any federal agency from which it has received a grant when an employee has been convicted of a violation of any state or federal criminal drug statute. The notice shall be provided within ten days after receiving notice from the employee of the conviction or after receiving other actual notice of the conviction.

(C) Alcohol and Drug Testing.

(1) Circumstances requiring testing. The Administrative Director, or the director's designee, upon the recommendation of the Director of Human Resources, or the director's designee, and sufficient cause shown, may require an employee to undergo an alcohol or drug test under the following circumstances:

- When there is reasonable cause to suspect that the employee may be intoxicated or under the influence of a controlled substance not prescribed by the employee's physician;
- When the employee is involved in a significant incident in which the employee or another person has a reportable and recordable injury or in which documented property damage has occurred;
- Pursuant to the specifications and provisions of a counseling, employee assistance, or rehabilitative program to which the employee has been referred as a result of a previous corrective action pursuant to Adm. P. 21 (Corrective Actions).

(2) Refusal to submit to testing. An employee who refuses to consent or submit to an alcohol or drug test when required under this policy shall be subject to corrective action pursuant to Adm. P. 21 (Corrective Actions).

(3) Confidentiality. Confidentiality concerning alcohol or drug test results shall be maintained to the extent provided by law, and an employee shall have the opportunity to refute the results of any alcohol or drug test.

(D) Corrective Actions. An employee who is found to have violated this policy is subject to appropriate corrective action pursuant to Adm. P. 21 (Corrective Actions).

(E) Employee Assistance and Rehabilitation. If an employee is convicted of a violation of any state or federal statute proscribing the abuse of alcohol or the possession or sale of a controlled substance, or if an employee has a confirmed positive alcohol or drug test, the Court may require the employee to participate in and satisfactorily complete an alcohol or drug assistance or rehabilitation program as a prerequisite to continued employment or as part of a corrective action.

Effective Date: January 1, 2004

Amended: April 1, 2009

Administrative Policy 23. Weapons and Violence Free Workplace.

This policy is intended to establish consistent standards and expectations for the development, promotion, and maintenance of a safe and productive workplace at the Supreme Court that is free from the effects of weapons and violence.

(A) Weapons Prohibited. Except as provided in OJC Reg. 11, no employee shall possess, carry, or store a weapon while on Court property or engaged in the course of the employee's employment or official responsibilities for the Court unless specifically required to do so as a condition of the employee's work assignment. Any employee who violates this policy is subject to having the matter referred to the appropriate law enforcement officials.

(B) Acts and Threats of Violence Prohibited. No employee shall engage in an act or make a threat of violence while on Court property, while engaged in the course of employment or official responsibilities for the Court, or when conducting business for the Court. Acts and threats of violence may include the following activities:

(1) Threats and intimidation. Engaging in threatening, intimidating, harassing, or coercive behavior that is sufficiently severe or offensive so as to alter the conditions of employment, or to create a hostile, abusive, or intimidating work environment for another person;

(2) Stalking. Willfully, maliciously, or repeatedly following or stalking another person;

(3) Communications. Making or sending a threatening, intimidating, harassing, or coercive statement, telephone call, letter, or other written or electronic communication to another person, with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for the person's safety, or the safety of the person's family, friends, associates, or property;

(4) Physical contact. Intentionally engaging in physical contact with another person that would cause a reasonable person to believe the person is being assaulted;

(5) Damaging property. Intentionally damaging or defacing the personal property of another person or property owned, operated, or controlled by the Court.

(C) Domestic Violence. The Court is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that facilitates the needs of employees who are victims of domestic violence. The Court shall not discriminate against an employee in any employment actions because the employee is, or is perceived to be, a victim of domestic violence. The Administrative Director may issue guidelines establishing a workplace plan addressing domestic violence, including appropriate employee protection, assistance, and education measures.

(D) Notification of Protection or Restraining Order. An employee who obtains a protection or restraining order shall notify the Director of Human Resources. Upon notification, the Director of Human Resources shall inform the appropriate Court personnel.

(E) Reporting Acts or Threats of Violence. An employee shall report any acts or threats of violence to the employee's Senior Staff supervisor or Court security.

(F) Corrective Action. An employee who is found to have violated this policy is subject to appropriate corrective action pursuant to Adm. P. 21 (Corrective Actions).

Effective Date: July 1, 2004

Amended: April 1, 2009; February 13, 2025

Administrative Policy 24. Discrimination and Harassment.

This policy is intended to establish consistent standards and expectations for the development, promotion, and maintenance of a workplace at the Supreme Court that is free from the effects of discrimination and harassment.

(A) Prohibited Activity. No employee shall engage in or be subject to a prohibited discriminatory practice or harassment, including sexual harassment.

(1) Prohibited discriminatory practice. For the purpose of this policy, a “prohibited discriminatory practice” means a decision relating to either the recruitment, hiring, working conditions, compensation, training, promotion, transfer, or retention of employees or the selection of vendors to provide goods or services, when the decision is made with regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, citizenship, marital status, veteran’s status, or non-disqualifying disability.

(2) Harassment. For the purpose of this policy, “harassment” means conduct based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, citizenship, marital status, veteran’s status, or non-disqualifying disability that unreasonably interferes with a person’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment for a person. It involves unwelcome or unwanted conduct, including verbal and non-verbal communications, when the conduct consists of one or more of the following:

- Using racially derogatory words, phrases, or epithets;
- Demonstrations of a racial or ethnic nature, such as a use of gestures, pictures, or drawings which would offend a particular racial or ethnic group;
- Comments about a person’s skin color or other racial or ethnic characteristics;
- Making disparaging remarks about a person’s gender that are not sexual in nature;
- Negative comments about a person’s religious beliefs or lack of religious beliefs;
- Expressing negative stereotypes regarding a person’s birthplace or ancestry;
- Negative comments regarding a person’s age when referring to a person 40 years of age or older;

- Derogatory or intimidating references to a person's mental or physical impairment.

(3) Sexual harassment. For the purpose of this policy, "sexual harassment" means conduct based upon sex that unreasonably interferes with a person's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment for a person. It involves unwelcome or unwanted conduct, including verbal and non-verbal communications and physical contact, when the conduct consists of one or more of the following:

- Making submission to a sexual advance or request for sexual favor an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment;
- Making submission to or rejection of a sexual advance or request for sexual favor a basis for employment decisions affecting the person to whom the harassment is directed;
- Making sexual innuendo, using sexually vulgar or explicit language, making sexually suggestive comments or sounds, telling jokes of a sexual nature, or making sexual propositions or threats;
- Displaying or disseminating sexually suggestive objects, books, magazines, computer software, internet websites, e-mail, graphic commentaries, photographs, cartoons, or pictures;
- Touching, pinching, leering, making obscene gestures, brushing against the body, or engaging in sexual intercourse or sexual assault;

(B) Reporting an incident. An employee who believes to have been subject to or observed any prohibited discriminatory practice or harassment by a Justice, other employee, Court appointee, person who conducts business with the Court, or visitor should report it immediately to any member of Senior Staff, the Director of Human Resources, the Administrative Director, or, if the subject of the prohibited discriminatory practice or harassment is an employee and the incident did not involve that employee's immediate supervisor, to the employee's immediate supervisor. Any of these persons to whom an incident is reported shall promptly notify the Director of Human Resources.

(C) Investigation and written report. Upon receiving a report of an alleged prohibited discriminatory practice or harassment involving an employee, Court appointee, person who conducts business with the Court, or visitor, the Director of Human Resources, or the director's designee, shall immediately and thoroughly investigate the incident and prepare a written report. The report shall contain the findings of the investigator and, if the investigator believes a violation of paragraph (A) of this policy has occurred, a recommendation for corrective action

or sanction pursuant to paragraph (F) of this policy. The report shall be provided to the parties involved.

If the alleged prohibited discriminatory practice or harassment involves a Justice, the Director of Human Resources shall notify the Administrative Director, who shall report the allegation to the Chief Justice for whatever action the Court considers appropriate.

(D) Determination of incident.

(1) Agreement of the parties. If the parties involved agree with the findings and recommended corrective action contained in the written report, the Director of Human Resources shall obtain the signature of each party on the report within five business days after it is provided to them. The Director of Human Resources shall promptly provide a copy of the signed report to the Administrative Director for review. Absent extraordinary circumstances demonstrated in the report, the Administrative Director shall approve its immediate implementation.

(2) Formal hearing. If any party involved does not agree with the findings or recommended corrective action contained in the written report or if the Administrative Director believes extraordinary circumstances are demonstrated in the report, within five business days after receiving the report the Administrative Director shall take appropriate action, including appointment of a hearing officer to conduct a formal hearing on the matter.

(E) Conflicts.

(1) Director of Human Resources. If a party or witness to an incident reported under this policy is the Director of Human Resources, the Administrative Director shall designate another member of the Court staff to perform the duties of the Director of Human Resources as required by this policy.

(2) Administrative Director. If a party or witness to an incident reported under this policy is the Administrative Director, the Chief Justice shall perform the duties of the Administrative Director as required by this policy.

(3) Chief Justice. If a party to an incident reported under this policy is the Chief Justice, the next most senior Justice shall perform the duties of the Chief Justice as required by this policy.

(F) Corrective Action. An employee who is found to have violated paragraph (A) of this policy shall be subject to appropriate corrective action as set forth in Adm. P. 21 (Corrective Actions).

(G) Confidentiality. The Court shall make every reasonable effort to protect the privacy of the parties in the process. Parties and witnesses shall maintain confidentiality with respect to a complaint or report. However, the Court cannot ensure that complaints

or reports will be kept strictly confidential.

(H) Distribution of Policy. All requests for proposals and solicitations for employment and to provide goods or services shall reference this policy and the Court's prohibition against discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

Effective Date: July 1, 2003

Amended: September 1, 2007; April 1, 2009