

The Supreme Court of Ohio

Court Improvement Program (CIP) Mediation Grant Request for Applications

Open July 1, 2026 to August 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Section 1. Overview

The Supreme Court of Ohio (“Court”) is requesting grant applications to support the creation or expansion of mediation programs within abuse, neglect, and dependency (A/N/D) cases, the establishment of emancipation mediation programs for older youth preparing to transition out of foster care, as well as school attendance mediation programs designed to address absenteeism and prevent child welfare or juvenile justice involvement. Up to seven applicant 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. These programs aim to strengthen family engagement, improve communication among families and system partners, reduce conflict, support timely permanency outcomes, address barriers to school attendance, and promote collaborative problem-solving. This grant opportunity supports courts in implementing mediation strategies that improve outcomes for children and families while strengthening collaboration among courts, schools, agencies, caregivers, youth, and community partners.

Section 2. Scope of Grant

Grant funds are intended to support a variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing mediation services for A/N/D cases, emancipation and transition planning for older youth, and school attendance matters. Eligible uses include establishing or expanding court-based or court-referred mediation programs, providing specialized mediation services for youth, families, caregivers, schools, agencies, and legal representatives, and addressing barriers that impact permanency, family engagement, and school attendance. Funds may also be used to support training, consultation, and program development to ensure high-quality mediation practices, as well as data collection, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement efforts. Each juvenile court may apply for up to \$80,000, with awards made on a reimbursement basis. Matching funds are not required.

Section 3. Period of Grant

The project period begins on or about October 1, 2026, and ends September 30, 2027. 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

Common pleas juvenile courts in Ohio are eligible to apply. Funding is available for projects that establish, expand, or enhance mediation services related to A/N/D cases, emancipation and transition planning for older youth, and/or school attendance matters. Proposed projects must demonstrate a connection to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families through mediation, collaboration, and early intervention efforts.

Section 5. Allowable Uses of Funds

Examples of allowable uses include hiring or contracting with mediators, providing mediation training or qualification, and 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 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 mediation programs in A/N/D cases.
 - Establish or expand school attendance mediation programs designed to address chronic absenteeism and improve educational engagement.
 - Support specialized emancipation mediation services for youth, caregivers, agencies, schools, and legal representatives.
 - Strengthen collaboration among families, youth, schools, courts, agencies, and community partners.
 - Provide training, consultation, and program development to ensure high-quality mediation practices.
 - Strengthen data collection, outcome measurement, and evaluation of mediation services.
 - Improve family engagement, communication, and collaborative problem-solving to support positive outcomes for children and youth.
 - Increase access to mediation services through innovative practices, including virtual and hybrid mediation options.

(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):** Project demonstrates a clear connection to improving family engagement, permanency outcomes, youth transition planning, school attendance, educational engagement, or the prevention of child welfare and juvenile justice involvement.
2. **Need and Clarity of Impact (25 points):** Application clearly identifies existing challenges or service gaps and explains how mediation will address those needs and improve outcomes for children, youth, families, schools, or the court system.
3. **Feasibility and Sustainability (25 points):** Project includes a realistic implementation plan, identifies qualified mediators and key partners, and demonstrates the potential for long-term sustainability beyond the grant period.
4. **Innovation and Replicability (10 points):** Project demonstrates innovative approaches to mediation and has the potential to serve as a model that can be replicated by other courts or communities.
5. **Prior Funding Consideration (10 points):** Courts that have not previously received CIP mediation funding may receive priority consideration.

(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, schools, communities or the court system.

Examples include:

- Increased family participation in case planning and decision-making.
- Reduction in contested hearings, truancy filings, or continuances.
- Shorter timeframes to permanency and case resolution.
- Increased school attendance and educational engagement.
- Higher satisfaction among families, youth, schools, and system partners.
- Improved collaboration among families, schools, courts, agencies, and community partners.
- Reduced barriers to school attendance and reduced need for formal court involvement.
- Improved communication and collaboration during emancipation and transition planning.

Applicants should describe both short-term impacts (e.g., increased family participation in case planning, improved school attendance, or enhanced collaboration among stakeholders) and long-term impacts (e.g., shorter timeframes to permanency, sustained educational engagement, reduced court involvement, or improved outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood).

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 objective, implementation activities, and impact measurements.
3. The receiving court shall, upon request, provide any and all activity and financial reports related to the purchase under the grant to the Court.
4. A receiving court shall immediately notify the Court in writing of a decision to decline the grant award.
5. 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. Awarded entities shall be familiar with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards under the Code of Federal Regulations and the requirements shall be followed through the duration of the grant award period. Federal financial assistance requirements are located under Title 2 Part 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations and requirements specific to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are located under Title 2 Part 300.

(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 Wednesday, August 5, 2026** to CFC@sc.ohio.gov.

Late applications will not be accepted. Applicants will be notified of the status of their submission no later than **September 16, 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 120 days after notification of funding award or by February 1, 2027, whichever comes first.

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 mediation (e.g., abuse, neglect, dependency, emancipation, or school attendance).
- Number of mediation sessions conducted.
- Mediation outcomes (agreement reached, partial agreement, no agreement, or other resolution).
- Project-specific outcome measures, such as family participation, school attendance improvements, reduction in contested hearings, reduction in truancy filings, or other identified performance indicators.
- Narrative summary of successes, challenges, lessons learned, and any adjustments made to improve program effectiveness.
- Description of collaboration efforts among families, youth, schools, courts, agencies, and community partners, as applicable.

A final cumulative report will be due by October 15, 2027, 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