

## Guidance for Role-Players

To ensure flexibility and accessibility all of our role plays are conducted by Video Mediation using a tool called Zoom. To prepare please [download a free version of Zoom](#) if you have not already been using it. You don't need a paid version of Zoom to participate in role plays but downloading the app makes it easier for you to join role plays.

You can access the Role Play Scheduler link for your course on the Course Menu on the left-hand side of your course.

The course you are on will indicate your requirements for the number of role plays you must do. You can do more as a role player or observer if you want.

### Quick Links

[Mi Study 247](#) (our learning management system)

[Mi Webinars and Events](#)

### What happens in Role Plays?

The aim of the role-play is to give the mediator an environment in which they can practice and demonstrate their skills in mediation.

The secondary aim is to give role players the opportunity to learn what it feels like to be a client and also to benefit from the skills of your mediator and the feedback from the mentor.

Your job as a role player is to provide a scenario that is believable and allows the mediator to develop and demonstrate all their skills.

### How to book in for and prepare for role plays

1. Navigate to the role play scheduler using the link provided in your course menu.
2. You read down for the day and across for the time, scenario and so on. Make sure you are looking at your time zone. There are always at least three and up to five in the summer.
3. Write your name as a role player in a time slot that works for you. Make a note of the time in your calendar or diary along with the Zoom number for the mentor. **You will not get automatic reminders it is your responsibility to remember and turn up!**
4. Locate the role play scenario which will be in the Role Play Scenarios folder in your course and read it prior to the scheduled role play. If you are a member you may have to email your mentor for the scenario if you can't find it in the folder in the Mi Members course.
5. Just before the allocated time get yourself some water or a hot drink ready for your two-hour commitment, open your Zoom app and put in the meeting number for the mentor.

## What if I can't do the role play due to another commitment?

When booking a role play as a mediator or as a role player, please be aware that this is putting in place a commitment to participate.

The mentor will put aside their time to mentor the role play and the two other participants will also put aside the time to participate. If you drop out at the last minute, then you are affecting 3 other people who have committed their time, AND you have not left enough time to find a replacement. When this happens, most role plays will be cancelled.

## How to avoid causing problems

- 1 Do not put your name in the role play scheduler unless you are committed to attending.
- 2 If you cannot make it, then advise your mentor and other role players 'As Soon As Possible' so that the slot can be freed to allow another participant to take your place.
- 3 **Do not simply remove your name from the scheduler and hope that no one will notice. This is very disruptive and unfair to other students who were relying on you and we can check the history to see who it was that withdrew without notice at the last minute.**

## How to notify the others

- If there is plenty of time email the mentor and let them know. You can use the email at the top of the role play spreadsheet or the course inbox.
- If it is within 24 hours of the role play email the mentor and other students using the course inbox telling them you will not be able to participate, the date and time that the role play was scheduled.

## What if I'm an observer

Observers are welcome and encouraged as it is a really good way to prepare for your first mediation after you have role played as a role player a few times and also as preparation before your assessment.

When you are observing it is a great idea to get the role play assessment tool for the particular role play and use it to focus your observation. Look for the language skills such as summaries, reframes, reflections, the use of silence etc used by the mediator. Look for the transitions and the facilitation of the process steps as you observe.

**Don't turn up late** – if the role play has started you will not be let in to avoid distracting the mediator. Make sure that you are logged in and ready 5 minutes before the scheduled time for the role play to start.

## Role-Player Etiquette

**IMPORTANT: Read the role-play and print it if you want before the scheduled start time.**

You should prepare before logging into Zoom, so you know your scenario and we are not wasting time waiting for role players to find and read scenario.

### Get into character.

**DO remember you are in mediation because you have a dispute.** Add some disagreement, try to interrupt, and react to things as you would if you were the person you are playing. Give your mediator the opportunity to enforce their ground rules for respectful behaviour by interrupting during the parties opening statement if you feel that a party would be triggered to do that.

**Do be willing to discuss the issues.** During the parties opening statements allow the mediator to draw out the issues. Don't just read them off in one statement! Be willing to discuss the issues more deeply during the exploration phase from your point of view and private session as you feel is appropriate. Embellish for realism but don't add major new facts or deliberate red herrings to the scenario you've been given.

**Do be willing to generate options.** If the mediator is encouraging you to come up with options, make sure you do. Remember that you are in mediation to try and resolve the issues. Act that way! If an opportunity to come up with a workable solution doesn't arrive before the private session try to work with the mediator during the session. After the private sessions think about the consequences of not reaching any agreement and if possible, come up with something to allow the mediator to practice documenting agreements.

**Do realise that role plays don't have to end in a full agreement for the mediator to be competent.** Be cooperative because you want a resolution (as most parties who agree to mediation do) but don't just hand the mediator a resolution out of nowhere. That doesn't mean that you should be avoidant or stonewall or the aggressive client from hell. If you are behaving in a way that in the real world the mediator would stop the mediation if they couldn't get you back into a resolution mindset. Testing the mediator with a really difficult scenario is not appropriate. Remember they are still learning so be a good role player! If possible, give them something to write down even if it is an interim agreement but do not hand the mediator a completely unrealistic resolution if there is no way you would have agreed to that. Don't make the mediator feel they have pulled off a miracle if they haven't.

**Do add a moderate level of emotion.** That does not mean have a meltdown or make it impossible for the mediation to continue! It means try to connect in with what your character may be thinking and feeling and feel free to express sadness, frustration etc.

## Don't do this!

**Don't add surprising new facts.** This will distort the role play scenario and throw out your other role player who has to adjust to the changes you've made. Sometimes people do this to make themselves not look bad. It is better for your learning to experience what it is like for someone caught out with questionable behaviour than to change the scenario to make yourself look blameless. That will help you to understand the importance of helping parties save face by using private sessions and other techniques to really challenge them.

**Don't bog things down.** We don't have to go into the detail that we would in the real world. A role play is a simulation not a re-enactment. We are limited to 90 – 100 minutes for the role-play. The role play will be stopped before the two hour mark to allow for feedback, regardless of where the mediator is up to in the mediation. Keep to the agenda items only and accept that not all items will be fully explored in many cases. A normal mediation would usually be scheduled for a minimum of three hours but some tribunals do use 2 hour mediations so be aware of that.

**Don't forget that if people didn't speak English you should have an interpreter.** While some role plays may indicate lower levels of financial or English literacy the parties have been screened and can mediate without an interpreter. Do ask the mediator to explain jargon or complex language if you think that they are speaking in a way that a person with basic education could understand but don't allow language or communication issues to be a distraction to the role play and disrupt the flow of the mediation.

**Don't dig your heels in and refuse to budge.** All parties in our role plays should have an interest in reaching a resolution for the dispute and all scenarios are resolvable if the mediator facilitates the process adequately. Deciding that you are not going to give in or compromise on anything is not appropriate as a role player as that is a power move related to your ego and not related to the actual scenario!

**Don't agree to anything and everything.** If you do that your mediator will have nothing to work with and it will be a very unrealistic scenario wasting everyone's time. There are points in all scenario that need assistance to resolve so do not change the scenario to the extent that the mediator has nothing to do. Also don't just mediate yourselves in the exploration. If you don't feel that you have guidance stop talking until the mediator steps in to help with facilitating the communication.

## Remember

These are role-plays, not real life. It is not about winning or losing. It is about providing a believable role-play so that the mediator can practice, build, and demonstrate their skills and be assessed.

It is also about you experiencing how a mediation can take a reasonable person from what they feel is an unresolvable situation to an acceptable way forward.

Risk screening has already occurred (unless you are doing a pre-mediation role play in our FDR Course) so do not behave in an extreme way.

It is beneficial for you to be a role player as you will gain personal experience of the mediation or FDR process and be able to see and feel what is effective or causes negative outcomes. You will also gain new insights while participating in the feedback at the end.

You will never win an Oscar for your role-playing efforts so please keep your focus on helping your mediator by being a good role player.

## Role Play Scenarios

The role play scenarios are in the files area of each course in a folder called role play scenarios.

If you see the name of a scenario in the scheduler but can't see the scenario email the role play mentor as soon as you are able to so that they can ensure that you have the scenario prior to the session.

## The Assessment Tools

The tools used to provide feedback and assessment are available in your course.

- **NMAS Course** - You will find the assessment tool attached to the role play tasks as the mediator and also in the files area.
- **Family Dispute Resolution / Property FDR** - there are role plays for pre-mediation, high conflict pre-mediation, parenting FDR, Property FDR, Child Inclusive FDR, Video Shuttle, and safety planning role plays. You will find the assessment tool attached to the role play tasks as the mediator and also in the files area.
- **Facilitated Discussion Course** – you will find the feedback tool attached to the role play task as the facilitator and also in the files area.

## Where to get help

**If you have a question that isn't urgent**, such as a question about an assessment task or you notice an issue in a page such as a broken link or spelling error please **use the course inbox to send an email to a course mentor**.

If you include the Page Name (should be at the top of the page) that will help us find the issue or identify which task you are stuck on. If there is a link to a document that has broken check in the files area for the document name. It may have been updated and we missed the link but also please let us know so we can fix the broken link.

**If you have an urgent question** - for example you're in the middle of a task and you want to get it finished, you are having trouble getting into or preparing for a role play or any other time sensitive issue call 1300 781 533 or your mentor.

- Cynthia Brooking - 0421 28 98 54
- Ken Speakman - 0404 072 330
- Lee Lee - 0432 808 101
- Joanne Law - 0401 293 500
- Jo Croxton - 0421 631 935 (FDR only)