The program is voluntary and does not carry any cost to either the consumer or business. We may also send you other useful information that may assist you become a better-informed business.

guidelines

for understanding Consumer Mediation and Arbitration process in Massachusetts

City of Worcester

Consumer Rights Program

Working in cooperation with Massachusetts Attorney General's Office

Worcester Consumer Rights Program

Proudly serving the residents of Worcester and neighboring towns of:
Auburn, Berlin, Boylston, Clinton, Grafton, Holden, Leicester, Millbury, Northborough, Paxton, Shrewsbury, Southborough, West Boylston, and Westborough.

Office of Human Rights & Disabilities
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"The City of Worcester is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirm-ative action."

Massachusetts approach to Consumer Protection

Consumers in Massachusetts have rights.....and those rights are protected and enforced by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (AGO). Massachusetts Consumer Protection law is derived under the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 93A (M.G.L. c.93A).

However, most businesses may be unaware of these rights. Consumer rights in Massachusetts extend (but are not limited) to issues in unfair trade practices, defective product, car sales & financing, deceptive pricing, home improvement, e-commerce, etc. Consumers may therefore seek recourse against a business , under M.G.L. c.93A, either in a small claims court (for claims up to $7,000) or any of the district courts in Massachusetts (for claims over $7,000).

What does this mean for my business?

Every business wants to do what is right for the consumer. As such, a consumer complaint does not always result in a legal tussle, which can be costly, time-consuming and bears negatively on your business. It can be mutually resolved between both parties. This method of mutual resolution is sometime referred to as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) . It may take the form of "Mediation" or "Arbitration" process.

**In mediation, a consumer (typically referred to as the "complainant") and the business (referred to as the "respondent") are brought together by a neutral third party (the "mediator"), who seek to facilitate the process and resolve the problem.
The goal of mediation is to find points of agreement between both parties and ultimately a ground for resolution. The format is very informal. It can be by mail correspondent, telephone engagement or face-to-face negotiation.

**Arbitration is the second form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) outside the courts system. However, both parties (complainant and respondent) to the dispute would typically agree to be bound by the arbitration decision. The process is overseen by an independent third party (or a group of individuals) known as the adjudicator(s) or arbitrator(s). Consumer contracts may sometimes include arbitration clause so that if a dispute were to arise, it will be adjudicated by the process of arbitration. The process is more formal than mediation but quicker than litigation. It uses the discovery procedure which involves taking and answering questions and producing relevant supporting documents.

Who we are and what we do:

We are Worcester Consumer Rights Program (WCRP) and we work in cooperation with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (AGO).
The purpose of the Program is to provide amicable mediation to consumers who are involved in a dispute or have a complaint against a business that is licensed to operate in Massachusetts.