

signed the demand letter within 15 days of receipt of the written notice. The petition must state why the employee believes the agency's determination concerning the existence or amount of the debt is in error, and set forth objections to the involuntary repayment schedule. The timely filing of a petition will suspend the commencement of collection proceedings.

(b) The employee's petition or statement must be signed by the employee.

(c) Petitions for hearing made after the expiration of the 15 day period may be accepted if the employee can show that the delay was because of circumstances beyond his or her control or because of failure to receive notice of the time limit.

(d) If the employee timely requests a pre-offset hearing or the timeliness is waived, the program official must:

(1) Notify the employee whether the employee may elect an oral hearing or whether he or she may have only a "paper hearing," i.e., a review on the written record (see 4 CFR 102.3(c)). In either case, the program official will arrange for a hearing official; and

(2) The program official will provide the hearing official with a copy of all records on which the determination of the debt and any involuntary repayment schedule are based.

(e) An employee who elects an oral hearing must notify the hearing official and the program official in writing within 5 days of receipt of the notice under paragraph (d)(1) of this section and within 20 days of receipt of the notice under (d)(1) the employee shall fully identify and explain with reasonable specificity all the facts, evidence and witnesses which the employee believes support his or her position.

(f) The hearing official shall notify the program official and the employee of the date, time and location of the hearing.

(g) If the employee later elects to have the hearing based only on the written submissions, notification must be given to the hearing official and the program official at least 3 calendar days before the date of the oral hearing. The hearing official may waive the 3-day requirement for good cause.

(h) Failure of the employee to appear at the oral hearing can result in dis-

missal of the petition and affirmation of the agency's decision.

§ 105-56.007 Pre-offset oral hearing.

(a) Oral hearings are informal in nature. The agency, represented by a program official or a representative of the Office of General Counsel, and the employee, or his or her representative, shall explain their case in the form of an oral presentation with reference to the documentation submitted. The employee may testify on his or her own behalf, subject to cross examination. Other witnesses may be called to testify where the hearing official determines the testimony to be relevant and not redundant.

(b) The hearing official shall—

(1) Conduct a fair and impartial hearing; and

(2) Preside over the course of the hearing, maintain decorum, and avoid delay in the disposition of the hearing.

(c) The employee may represent himself or herself or may be represented by another person at the hearing. The employee may not be represented by a person who creates an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

(d) Oral hearings are open to the public. However, the hearing official may close all or any portion of the hearing when doing so is in the best interests of the employee or the public.

(e) Oral hearings may be conducted by conference call at the request of the employee or at the discretion of the hearing official.

§ 105-56.008 Pre-offset "paper hearing."

If a hearing is to be held only upon written submissions, the hearing official shall issue a decision based upon the record and responses submitted by both the agency and the employee.

§ 105-56.009 Written decision.

Within 60 days of filing of the employee's petition for a pre-offset hearing, the hearing official will issue a written decision setting forth: The facts supporting the nature and origin of the debt; the hearing official's analysis, findings and conclusions as to the employee's or agency's grounds, the amount and validity of the debt and the repayment schedule.