

## §283.9

answer may be amended without prior authorization by the ALJ. Thereafter, such an amendment may only be made as authorized by the ALJ upon a showing of cause.

### §283.9 Withdrawal of appeal.

At any time before the ALJ files an initial decision, the State agency may withdraw its appeal and agree to pay the full amount of the claim. By withdrawing an appeal, the State agency waives all opportunity to appeal or seek further administrative or judicial review on the claim or related matters.

### §283.10 Consent decision.

At any time before the ALJ files an initial decision, FNS and the State agency may agree to entry of a consent decision. Such decision shall be filed in the form of a decision signed by the parties with appropriate space for signature by the ALJ and shall contain an admission of at least the jurisdictional facts, consent to the issuance of the agreed decision without further procedure and such other admissions or statements as may be agreed between the parties. The ALJ shall enter such decision without further procedures, unless an error is apparent on the face of the document. Such decision shall be final and shall take effect 30 days after the date of the delivery or service of such decision and is not subject to further administrative or judicial.

### §283.11 Prehearing conference and procedure.

(a) *Time and place.* The ALJ shall direct the parties or their counsel to participate in a prehearing conference at any reasonable time prior to the hearing. The prehearing conference shall be held at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC. Reasonable notice of the time, place of the prehearing conference and if personal attendance will be necessary shall be given. Prehearing conferences may be conducted telephonically. The ALJ shall order each of the parties to furnish at the prehearing conference or at another time prior to the hearing the following:

(1) An outline of the appeal or defense;

(2) The legal theories upon which the party will rely;

(3) Copies of or a list of documents that the party anticipates relying upon at the hearing; and

(4) A list of witnesses who will testify on behalf of the party. At the discretion of the party furnishing such list of witnesses, the names of the witnesses need not be furnished if they are otherwise identified in some meaningful way, such as a short statement of the type of evidence they will offer.

(b) *Procedures.* The ALJ shall not order any of the foregoing procedures that a party can show are inappropriate or unwarranted under the circumstances of the particular appeal.

(c) *Matters to be considered.* At the prehearing conference, the following matters shall be considered:

(1) The simplification of issues;

(2) The necessity of amendments to pleadings;

(3) The possibility of obtaining stipulations of facts and of the authenticity, accuracy, and admissibility of documents, which will avoid unnecessary proof;

(4) The limitation of the number of expert or other witnesses;

(5) Negotiation, compromise, or settlement of issues;

(6) The exchange of copies of proposed exhibits;

(7) The nature of and the date by which discovery, as provided in §283.12, must be completed;

(8) The identification of documents or matters of which official notice may be requested;

(9) A schedule to be followed by the parties for the completion of the actions decided at the conference; and

(10) Such other matters as may expedite and aid in the disposition of the appeal.

(d) *Reporting.* (1) A prehearing conference will not be stenographically reported unless so directed by the ALJ.

(2) Any party to the appeal may, upon motion, request the ALJ to allow for a stenographic transcript of a prehearing conference. The party requesting the transcript shall bear the transcription cost of producing the transcript and the duplication cost for one transcript provided to the ALJ and to the other parties to the appeal.

(e) *Order.* Actions taken as a result of a conference shall be reduced to an appropriate written order, unless the ALJ concludes that a stenographic report, if available, shall suffice, or, in the event the conference takes place within 7 days of the beginning of the hearing, the ALJ elects to make a statement on the record at the hearing summarizing the actions taken.

#### § 283.12 Discovery.

(a) *Dispositions.*—(1) *Motion for taking deposition.* Only upon a finding by the ALJ that a deposition is necessary to preserve testimony as provided in this subparagraph, upon the motion of a party to the appeal, the ALJ may, at any time after the filing of the answer, order the taking of testimony by deposition. The motion shall set forth:

(i) The name and address of the proposed deponent;

(ii) The name and address of the person (referred to hereafter in this section as the “officer”) qualified under the regulations in this part to take depositions, before whom the proposed examination is to be made;

(iii) The proposed time and place of the examination, which shall be at least 15 days after the date of service of the motion; and

(iv) The reasons why such deposition should be taken, which shall be solely for the purpose of eliciting testimony which otherwise might not be available at the time of the hearing, for use as provided in accordance with paragraph (a)(7) of this section.

(2) *ALJ’s order for taking depositions.* If the ALJ finds that the testimony may not otherwise be available at the hearing, the taking of the deposition may be ordered. The order shall be served upon the parties, and shall state:

(i) The time and place of the examination;

(ii) The name of the officer before whom the examination is to be made; and

(iii) The name of the deponent. The officer and the time and place need not be the same as those suggested in the motion.

(3) *Qualifications of officer.* The deposition shall be made before an officer authorized by the law of the United States or by the law of the place of the

examination to administer oaths, or before an officer authorized by the Secretary to administer oaths.

(4) *Procedure on examination.* (i) The deponent shall be examined under oath or affirmation and shall be subject to cross-examination. Objections to questions or documents shall be in the short form, stating the grounds of objections relied upon. The questions propounded, together with all objections made (but not including argument or debate), shall be recorded verbatim. In lieu of oral examination, parties may transmit written questions to the officer prior to the examination and the officer shall propound such questions to the deponent.

(ii) The party taking the deposition shall arrange for the examination of the witness either by oral examination, or by written questions upon agreement of the parties or as directed by the ALJ. If the examination is conducted by means of written questions, copies of the questions shall be served upon the other party to the appeal and filed with the officer at least 10 days prior to the date set for the examination unless otherwise agreed, and the other party may serve cross questions and file them with the officer at any time prior to the time of the examination.

(iii) The parties may stipulate in writing or the ALJ may upon motion order that a deposition be taken by telephone. A deposition taken by telephone is to be taken at the place where the deponent is to answer questions propounded to the deponent.

(iv) The parties may stipulate in writing or the ALJ may upon motion order that a deposition be recorded by other than stenographic means. The stipulation or the order shall designate the manner of recording, preserving and filing of the deposition, and may include other provisions to assure that the recorded testimony is accurate and trustworthy.

(5) *Certification by the officer.* The officer shall certify on the deposition that the deponent was duly sworn and that the deposition is a true record of the deponent’s testimony. The officer shall then securely seal the deposition, together with one copy thereof (unless there are more than two parties in the