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(3) The recipient actually relied on the guidance as the basis for the conduct that constituted the violation; and

(4) The recipient's reliance on the guidance was reasonable.

(c) Mitigating circumstances exist if it would be unjust to compel the recovery of funds because the recipient's violation was caused by the Department's failure to provide timely guidance. To prove mitigating circumstances under this paragraph, the recipient shall prove that—

(1) The recipient in good faith submitted a written request for guidance with respect to the legality of a proposed expenditure or practice;

(2) The request was submitted to the Department at the address provided by notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER under this section;

(3) The request—

(i) Accurately described the proposed expenditure or practice; and

(ii) Included the facts necessary for the Department's determination of its legality;

(4) The request contained the certification of the chief legal officer of the appropriate State educational agency that the officer—

(i) Examined the proposed expenditure or practice; and

(ii) Believed it was permissible under State and Federal law applicable at the time of the certification;

(5) The recipient reasonably believed the proposed expenditure or practice was permissible under State and Federal law applicable at the time it submitted the request to the Department;

(6) No Departmental official authorized to provide the requested guidance responded to the request within 90 days of its receipt by the Department; and

(7) The recipient made the proposed expenditure or engaged in the proposed practice after the expiration of the 90-day period.

(d) Mitigating circumstances exist if it would be unjust to compel the recovery of funds because the recipient's violation was caused by the recipient's compliance with a judicial decree from a court of competent jurisdiction. To prove mitigating circumstances under this paragraph, the recipient shall prove that—

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(1) The recipient was legally bound by the decree;

(2) The recipient actually relied on the decree when it engaged in the conduct that constituted the violation; and

(3) The recipient's reliance on the decree was reasonable.

(e) If a Departmental official authorized to provide the requested guidance responds to a request described in paragraph (c) of this section more than 90 days after its receipt, the recipient that made the request shall comply with the guidance at the earliest practicable time.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3, 1234(f)(1), 1234b(b), and 3474(a))

[54 FR 19512, May 5, 1989. Redesignated at 58 FR 43473, Aug. 16, 1993]

§ 81.34 Notice of a disallowance decision.

(a) If an authorized Departmental official decides that a recipient must return funds under § 81.30, the official gives the recipient written notice of a disallowance decision. The official sends the notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, or other means that ensure proof of receipt.

(b)(1) The notice must establish a prima facie case for the recovery of funds, including an analysis reflecting the value of the program services actually obtained in a determination of harm to the Federal interest.

(2) For the purpose of this section, a prima facie case is a statement of the law and the facts that, unless rebutted, is sufficient to sustain the conclusion drawn in the notice. The facts may be set out in the notice or in a document that is identified in the notice and available to the recipient.

(3) A statement that the recipient failed to maintain records required by law or failed to allow an authorized representative of the Secretary access to those records constitutes a prima facie case for the recovery of the funds affected.

(i) If the recipient failed to maintain records, the statement must briefly describe the types of records that were not maintained and identify the recordkeeping requirement that was violated.

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(ii) If the recipient failed to allow access to records, the statement must briefly describe the recipient's actions that constituted the failure and identify the access requirement that was violated.

(c) The notice must inform the recipient that it may—

(1) Obtain a review of the disallowance decision by the OALJ; and

(2) Request mediation under § 81.13.

(d) The notice must describe—

(1) The time available to apply for a review of the disallowance decision; and

(2) The procedure for filing an application for review.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3, 1234(f)(1), 1234a(a), and 3474(a))

[54 FR 19512, May 5, 1989. Redesignated and amended at 58 FR 43473, Aug. 16, 1993; 60 FR 46494, Sept. 6, 1995; 61 FR 14484, Apr. 2, 1996]

§ 81.35 Reduction of claims.

The Secretary or an authorized Departmental official as appropriate may, after the issuance of a disallowance decision, reduce the amount of a claim established under this subpart by—

(a) Redetermining the claim on the basis of the proper application of the law, including the standards for the measure of recovery under § 81.31, to the facts;

(b) Compromising the claim under the Federal Claims Collection Standards in 4 CFR part 103; or

(c) Compromising the claim under § 81.36, if applicable.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3, 1234(f)(1), 1234a(j), and 3474(a); 31 U.S.C. 3711)

[54 FR 19512, May 5, 1989. Redesignated and amended at 58 FR 43473, Aug. 16, 1993]

§ 81.36 Compromise of claims under General Education Provisions Act.

(a) The Secretary or an authorized Departmental official as appropriate may compromise a claim established under this subpart without following the procedures in 4 CFR part 103 if—

(1)(i) The amount of the claim does not exceed \$200,000; or

(ii) The difference between the amount of the claim and the amount agreed to be returned does not exceed \$200,000; and

(2) The Secretary or the official determines that—

(i) The collection of the amount by which the claim is reduced under the compromise would not be practical or in the public interest; and

(ii) The practice that resulted in the disallowance decision has been corrected and will not recur.

(b) Not less than 45 days before compromising a claim under this section, the Department publishes a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER stating—

(1) The intention to compromise the claim; and

(2) That interested persons may comment on the proposed compromise.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3, 1234(f)(1), 1234a(j), and 3474(a))

[54 FR 19512, May 5, 1989. Redesignated at 58 FR 43473, Aug. 16, 1993]

§ 81.37 Application for review of a disallowance decision.

(a) If a recipient wishes to obtain review of a disallowance decision, the recipient shall file a written application for review with the Office of Administrative Law Judges, c/o Docket Clerk, Office of Hearings and Appeals, and, as required by § 81.12(b), shall serve a copy on the applicable Departmental official who made the disallowance decision.

(b) A recipient shall file an application for review not later than 60 days after the date it receives the notice of a disallowance decision.

(c) Within 10 days after receipt of a copy of the application for review, the authorized Departmental official who made the disallowance decision shall provide the ALJ with a copy of any document identified in the notice pursuant to § 81.34(b)(2).

(d) An application for review must contain—

(1) A copy of the disallowance decision of which review is sought;

(2) A statement certifying the date the recipient received the notice of that decision;

(3) A short and plain statement of the disputed issues of law and fact, the recipient's position with respect to these issues, and the disallowed funds the recipient contends need not be returned; and