

(b) For the purposes of this section, a related group of claims submitted at the same time shall include only those claims arising from the same transaction (e.g., grant, loan, application, or contract) that are submitted simultaneously as part of a single request, demand, or submission.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the reviewing official's authority to join in a single complaint against a person, claims that are unrelated or were not submitted simultaneously, regardless of the amount of money or the value of property or services demanded or requested, as long as the total amount for each claim does not exceed \$150,000.

§ 16.7 Complaint.

(a) On or after the date the Attorney General or his designee approves the issuance of a complaint in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3803(b)(1), the reviewing official may serve a complaint on the defendant, as provided in § 16.8.

(b) The complaint shall state—

(1) The allegations of liability against the defendant, including the statutory basis for liability, an identification of the claims or statements that are the basis for the alleged liability, and the reasons why liability allegedly arises from such claims or statements;

(2) The maximum amount of penalties and assessments for which the defendant may be held liable;

(3) Instructions for filing an answer to request a hearing, including a specific statement of the defendant's right to request a hearing by filing an answer and to be represented by an attorney;

(4) That the defendant has a right to review and obtain certain information pursuant to Section 16.20 herein; and

(5) That failure to file an answer within 30 days of service of the complaint will result in the imposition of the maximum amount of penalties and assessments without right to appeal.

(c) At the same time the reviewing official serves the complaint on the defendant(s), he or she shall serve the defendant with a copy of these regulations.

§ 16.8 Service of complaint.

(a) Service of a complaint must be made by a certified or registered mail or by delivery in any manner authorized by Rule 4(d) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

(b) Proof of service, stating the name and address of the person on whom the complaint was served, and the manner and date of service, may be made by—

(1) Affidavit of the individual making service;

(2) An acknowledged United States Postal Service return receipt card; or

(3) Written acknowledgement of the defendant or his representative.

§ 16.9 Answer.

(a) The defendant may request a hearing by filing an answer with the reviewing official within 30 days of service of the complaint. An answer shall be deemed to be a request for hearing.

(b) In the answer, the defendant—

(1) Shall admit or deny each of the allegations of liability made in the complaint;

(2) Shall state any defense on which the defendant intends to rely;

(3) May state any reasons why the defendant contends that the penalties and assessments should be less than the statutory maximum; and

(4) Shall state whether the defendant has authorized an attorney to act as defendant's representative, and shall state the name, address, and telephone number of the representative.

§ 16.10 Default upon failure to file an answer.

(a) If the defendant does not file an answer within the time prescribed in § 16.9(a), the reviewing official may refer the complaint to the ALJ for initial decision.

(b) Upon the referral of the complaint, the ALJ shall promptly serve on defendant in the manner prescribed in § 16.8, a notice that an initial decision will be issued under this section.

(c) If the defendant fails to file a timely answer, the ALJ shall assume the facts alleged in the complaint to be true and, if such facts establish liability under § 16.3, the ALJ shall issue an initial decision imposing the maximum

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amount of penalties and assessments allowed under the statute.

(d) Except as otherwise provided in this section, by failing to file a timely answer, the defendant waives any right to further review of the penalties and assessments imposed under paragraph (c) of this section, and the initial decision shall become final and binding upon the parties 30 days after it is issued.

(e) If, before such an initial decision becomes final, the defendant files a motion with the ALJ, and serves a copy on the agency, seeking to reopen on the grounds that extraordinary circumstances prevented the defendant from filing a timely answer, the initial decision shall be stayed pending the ALJ's decision on the motion. The ALJ shall permit the agency a reasonable amount of time, not less than 15 calendar days, to respond to the defendant's motion.

(f) If, on such motion, the defendant can demonstrate extraordinary circumstances excusing the failure to file a timely answer, the ALJ shall withdraw the initial decision, if such a decision has been issued pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section, and shall grant the defendant an opportunity to answer the complaint.

(g) A decision of the ALJ denying a defendant's motion under paragraph (e) of this section is not subject to reconsideration under § 16.38.

(h) The defendant may appeal to the authority head the decision denying a motion to reopen by filing a notice of appeal with the authority head within 15 days after the ALJ denies the motion. The timely filing of a notice of appeal shall stay the initial decision until the authority head decides the issue.

(i) If the defendant files a timely notice of appeal with the authority head, the ALJ shall forward the record of the proceeding to the authority head.

(j) The authority head shall decide expeditiously, and based solely on the record before the ALJ, whether extraordinary circumstances excuse the defendant's failure to file a timely answer.

(k) If the authority head decides that extraordinary circumstances excuse the defendant's failure to file a timely

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answer, the authority head shall remand the case to the ALJ with instructions to grant the defendant an opportunity to file an answer.

(1) If the authority head decides that the defendant's failure to file a timely answer is not excused, the authority head shall reinstate the initial decision of the ALJ, which shall become final and binding upon the parties 30 days after the authority head issues such decision.

§ 16.11 Referral of complaint and answer to the ALJ.

Upon receipt of an answer, the reviewing official shall file the complaint and answer with the ALJ.

§ 16.12 Notice of hearing.

(a) When the ALJ receives the complaint and answer, the ALJ shall promptly serve a notice of hearing upon the defendant and the agency representative in the manner prescribed by § 16.8.

(b) Such notice shall include—

(1) The tentative time and place, and the nature of the hearing;

(2) The legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;

(3) The matters of fact and law to be asserted;

(4) A description of the procedures for the conduct of the hearing;

(5) The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the representatives of the Government and of the defendant, if any; and

(6) Such other matters as the ALJ deems appropriate.

§ 16.13 Parties to the hearing.

(a) The parties to the hearing shall be the defendant and the authority.

(b) Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3730(c)(5), a private plaintiff under the False Claims Act may participate in these proceedings to the extent authorized by the provisions of that Act.

§ 16.14 Separation of functions.

(a) The investigating official, the reviewing official, and any employee or agent of the authority who takes part in investigating, preparing, or presenting a particular case may not, in such case or a factually related case—