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motion with the ALJ seeking to reopen on the grounds that extraordinary circumstances prevented the defendant from filing an answer, the initial decision must be stayed pending the ALJ's decision on the motion.

(f) If, on such a motion, the defendant can demonstrate extraordinary circumstances excusing the failure to file a timely answer, the ALJ shall withdraw the initial decision under paragraph (c) of this section, if such a decision has been issued, 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 § 33.38.

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

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

(j) The Department head decides expeditiously whether extraordinary circumstances excuse the defendant's failure to file a timely answer based solely on the record before the ALJ.

(k) If the Department head decides that extraordinary circumstances excuse the defendant's failure to file a timely answer, the Department head remands the case to the ALJ with instructions to grant the defendant an opportunity to answer.

(l) If the Department head decides that the defendant's failure to file a timely answer is not excused, the Department head reinstates the initial decision of the ALJ, which becomes final and binding upon the parties 30 days after the Department head issues that decision.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3809)

34 CFR Subtitle A (7-1-08 Edition)

§ 33.11 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.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3803(d)(2); 3809)

§ 33.12 Notice of hearing.

(a) When the ALJ receives the complaint and answer, the ALJ shall promptly serve a notice of hearing upon the defendant in the manner prescribed by § 33.8. At the same time, the ALJ shall send a copy of the notice to the representative for the Government.

(b) The notice must 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 name, address, and telephone number of the representative of the Government and of the defendant, if any; and

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

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3803(g)(2)(A))

§ 33.13 Parties to the hearing.

(a) The parties to the hearing are the defendant and the Department.

(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.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3803(g)(2))

§ 33.14 Separation of functions.

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

(1) Participate in the hearing as the ALJ;

(2) Participate or advise in the initial decision or the review of the initial decision by the Department head, except as a witness or a representative in public proceedings; or

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(3) Make the collection of penalties and assessments under 31 U.S.C. 3806.

(b) The ALJ may not be responsible to, or subject to the supervision or direction of, the investigating official or the reviewing official.

(c) Except as provided in paragraph (a) of this section, the representative for the Government may be employed anywhere in the Department, including in the offices of either the investigating official or the reviewing official.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3809(1)(2))

§ 33.15 Ex parte contacts.

No party or person (except employees of the ALJ's office) may communicate in any way with the ALJ on any matter at issue in a case, unless on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate. This provision does not prohibit a person or party from inquiring about the status of a case or asking routine questions concerning administrative functions or procedures.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3803(g)(1)(A))

§ 33.16 Disqualification of reviewing official or ALJ.

(a) A reviewing official or ALJ in a particular case may disqualify himself or herself at any time.

(b) A party may file with the ALJ a motion for disqualification of a reviewing official or an ALJ. That motion must be accompanied by an affidavit alleging personal bias or other reason for disqualification.

(c) The motion and affidavit must be filed promptly upon the party's discovery of reasons requiring disqualification, or the objections are deemed waived.

(d) The affidavit must state specific facts that support the party's belief that personal bias or other reason for disqualification exists and the time and circumstances of the party's discovery of those facts. It must be accompanied by a certificate of the representative of record that it is made in good faith.

(e) Upon the filing of the motion and affidavit, the ALJ shall not proceed further in the case until he or she resolves the matter of disqualification in

accordance with paragraph (f) of this section.

(f)(1) If the ALJ determines that a reviewing official is disqualified, the ALJ shall dismiss the complaint without prejudice.

(2) If the ALJ disqualifies himself or herself, the case must be reassigned promptly to another ALJ.

(3) If the ALJ denies a motion to disqualify, the Department head may determine the matter only as part of his or her review of the initial decision upon appeal, if any.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3803(g)(2)(G))

§ 33.17 Rights of parties.

Except as otherwise limited by this part, all parties may:

(a) Be accompanied, represented, and advised by a representative (as defined in § 33.2);

(b) Participate in any conference held by the ALJ;

(c) Conduct discovery under § 33.21;

(d) Agree to stipulations of fact or law, which must be made part of the record;

(e) Present evidence relevant to the issues at the hearing;

(f) Present and cross-examine witnesses;

(g) Present oral arguments at the hearing as permitted by the ALJ; and

(h) Submit written briefs and proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law after the hearing.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3803(g) (2) (E), (F), (3)(B)(ii))

§ 33.18 Authority of the ALJ.

(a) The ALJ shall conduct a fair and impartial hearing, avoid delay, maintain order, and assure that a record of the proceeding is made.

(b) The ALJ has the authority to:

(1) Set and change the date, time, and place of the hearing upon reasonable notice to the parties;

(2) Disqualify a non-attorney representative (designated as described in the § 33.2 definitions of "representative") if the ALJ determines that the representative is incapable of rendering reasonably effective assistance;

(3) Continue or recess the hearing in whole or in part for a reasonable period of time;