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hearing shall be fixed with due regard for the public interest and the convenience and necessity of the parties or their representatives. Requests to change the time of a hearing may be submitted to the Administrative Law Judge, who may modify the hearing date(s) and/or time(s) and place. All requests for a change in the date and time and/or place of a hearing must be received by the Administrative Law Judge and served upon the parties no later than 15 days before the scheduled hearing date.

(c) *Failure to appear at hearings: default.* Any respondent named in an order instituting proceedings as a person against whom findings may be made or penalties imposed who fails to appear (in person or through a representative) at a hearing of which he or she has been duly notified may be deemed to be in default pursuant to § 501.716(a). Without further proceedings or notice to the respondent, the Administrative Law Judge may enter a finding that the right to a hearing was waived, and the Penalty Notice shall constitute final agency action as provided in § 501.709(a)(2). A respondent may make a motion to set aside a default pursuant to § 501.726(e).

§ 501.716 Default.

(a) A party to a proceeding may be deemed to be in default and the Administrative Law Judge (or the Secretary's designee during review proceedings) may determine the proceeding against that party upon consideration of the record if that party fails:

(1) To appear, in person or through a representative, at any hearing or conference of which the party has been notified;

(2) To answer, to respond to a dispositive motion within the time provided, or otherwise to prosecute or defend the proceeding; or

(3) To cure a deficient filing within the time specified by the Administrative Law Judge (or the Secretary's designee) pursuant to § 501.729(b).

(b) In deciding whether to determine the proceedings against a party deemed to be in default, the Administrative Law Judge shall consider the record of the proceedings (including the Order Instituting Proceedings) and shall construe contested matters of fact and law against the party deemed to be in default.

(c) For information and procedures pertaining to a motion to set aside a default, see § 501.726(e).

§ 501.717 Consolidation of proceedings.

By order of the Administrative Law Judge, proceedings involving common questions of law and fact may be consolidated for hearing of any or all the matters at issue in such proceedings. The Administrative Law Judge may make such orders concerning the conduct of such proceedings as he or she deems appropriate to avoid unnecessary cost or delay. Consolidation shall not prejudice any rights under this subpart and shall not affect the right of any party to raise issues that could have been raised if consolidation had not occurred.

§ 501.718 Conduct and order of hearings.

All hearings shall be conducted in a fair, impartial, expeditious and orderly manner. Each party has the right to present its case or defense by oral and documentary evidence and to conduct such cross examination as may be required for full disclosure of the relevant facts. The Director shall present his or her case-in-chief first. The Director shall be the first party to present an opening statement and a closing statement and may make a rebuttal statement after the respondent's closing statement.

§ 501.719 Ex parte communications.

(a) *Prohibition.* (1) From the time the Director issues an Order Instituting Proceedings until the date of final decision, no party, interested person, or representative thereof shall knowingly make or cause to be made an ex parte communication.

(2) Except to the extent required for the disposition of ex parte communication matters as authorized by law, the Secretary's designee and the Administrative Law Judge presiding over any proceeding may not:

(i) Consult a person or party on an issue, unless on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate; or