



ARMED SERVICES BOARD OF CONTRACT APPEALS  
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## **NOTICE REGARDING ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

The Contract Disputes Act (CDA), 41 U.S.C. § 7105, states that boards of contract appeals "shall ... to the fullest extent practicable provide informal, expeditious, and inexpensive resolution of disputes[.]" Resolution of a dispute at the earliest stage feasible, by the fastest and least expensive method possible, benefits both parties. To that end, the parties are encouraged to consider Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) procedures for pre-claim and pre-final decision matters, as well as appeals pending before the Board. The Board may also conduct ADRs for any Federal agency. However, if the matter is not pending before the Board under its CDA jurisdiction, any settlement may not be paid out of the Judgment Fund.

The ADR methods described in this Notice are intended to suggest techniques that have worked in the past. Any appropriate method that brings the parties together in settlement, or partial settlement, of their disputes is a good method. The ADR methods listed are not intended to preclude the parties' use of other ADR techniques that do not require the Board's participation, such as settlement negotiations, fact-finding conferences or procedures, mediation, or minitrials not involving use of the Board's personnel. Any method, or combination of methods, including one that will result in a binding decision, may be selected by the parties without regard to the dollar amount in dispute.

The parties must jointly request ADR procedures at the Board. The request must be approved by the Board. The Board may also schedule a conference to explore the desirability and selection of an ADR method and related procedures. If an ADR involving the Board's participation is requested and approved by the Board, a Neutral will be appointed. If an Administrative Judge has already been assigned to an appeal, the same judge will normally be assigned to be the Neutral in an ADR. If an Administrative Judge has not yet been assigned to the appeal, or if the subject of the ADR is a matter pending before the contracting officer prior to any appeal, the Board will appoint an Administrative Judge to be the Neutral. In such instances, as well as situations in which the parties prefer that an assigned Administrative Judge not be appointed to serve as the Neutral, the parties may submit a list of at least three preferred Administrative Judges and the Board will endeavor to accommodate their preferences.

To facilitate full, frank and open discussion and presentations, any Neutral who has participated in a non-binding ADR procedure that has failed to resolve the underlying dispute will be recused from further participation in the matter unless the parties expressly agree otherwise in writing and the Board concurs. Further, the recused Neutral will not discuss the merits of the dispute or substantive matters involved in the ADR proceedings with other Board personnel.

Written material prepared specifically for use in an ADR proceeding, oral presentations made at an ADR proceeding, and all discussions in connection with such proceedings between the parties and the Neutral are confidential and, unless otherwise specifically agreed by the parties, inadmissible as evidence in any pending or future Board proceeding involving the parties or matter in dispute. However, evidence otherwise admissible before the Board is not rendered inadmissible because of its use in the ADR proceeding.

The ADR method and the procedures and requirements implementing the ADR method will be prescribed by the written agreement of the parties and approved by the Board. ADR methods can be used successfully at any stage of the litigation.

The following are examples of ADR methods commonly used at the Board:

1. *Nonbinding*:

Mediations: A Neutral is an Administrative Judge who will not normally hear or have any formal or informal decision-making authority in the matter and who is appointed for the purpose of facilitating settlement. In many circumstances, settlement can be fostered by a frank, in-depth discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each party's position with the Neutral. The agenda for meetings with the Neutral will be flexible to accommodate the requirements of the case. To further the settlement effort, the Neutral may meet with the parties either jointly or individually. A Neutral's recommendations are not binding on the parties. When this method is selected, the ADR agreement must contain a provision in which the parties and counsel agree not to subpoena the Neutral in any legal action or administrative proceeding of any kind to produce any notes or documents related to the ADR proceeding or to testify concerning any such notes or documents or concerning his/her thoughts or impressions.

2. *Binding*:

Summary Proceeding With Binding Decision: A summary proceeding with binding decision is a procedure whereby the resolution of the appeal is expedited and the parties try their appeal informally before an Administrative Judge. A binding "bench" decision may be issued upon conclusion of the proceeding, or a binding summary written decision will be issued by the judge no later than ten days following the later of

conclusion of the proceeding or receipt of a transcript. The parties must agree in the ADR agreement that all decisions, rulings, and orders by the Board under this method shall be final, conclusive, not appealable, and may not be set aside, except for fraud. All such decisions, rulings, and orders will have no precedential value. Pre-hearing, hearing, and post-hearing procedures and rules applicable to appeals generally will be modified or eliminated to expedite resolution of the appeal.

3. *Other Agreed Methods:* The parties and the Board may agree upon other informal methods, binding or nonbinding, that are structured and tailored to suit the requirements of the individual case.

The above-listed ADR procedures are intended to shorten and simplify the Board's more formalized procedures. Generally, if the parties resolve their dispute by agreement, they benefit in terms of cost and time savings and maintenance or restoration of amicable relations. The Board will not view the parties' participation in ADR proceedings as a sign of weakness. Any method adopted for dispute resolution depends upon both parties having a firm, good faith commitment to resolve their differences. Absent such intention, the best structured dispute resolution procedure is unlikely to be successful.