

§ 96.66 Hearing procedure.

(a) A hearing is public, except when the Secretary or the presiding officer determines that all or part of a hearing should be closed to prevent a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy (such as disclosure of information in medical records that would identify patients), to prevent the disclosure of a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information, or to protect investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes that are not available for public disclosure.

(b) A hearing will be conducted by the presiding officer. Employees of the Department will first give a full and complete statement of the action which is the subject of the hearing, together with the information and reasons supporting it, and may present any oral or written information relevant to the hearing. The State may then present any oral or written information relevant to the hearing. Both parties may confront and conduct reasonable cross-examination of any person (except for the presiding officer and counsel for the parties) who makes any statement on the matter at the hearing.

(c) The hearing is informal in nature, and the rules of evidence do not apply. No motions or objections relating to the admissibility of information and views will be made or considered, but either party may comment upon or rebut all such data, information, and views.

(d) The presiding officer may order the hearing to be transcribed. The State may have the hearing transcribed, at the State's expense, in which case a copy of the transcript is to be furnished to the Department at the Department's expense.

(e) The presiding officer may, if appropriate, allow for the submission of post-hearing briefs. The presiding officer shall prepare a written decision, which shall be based on a preponderance of the evidence, shall include a statement of reasons for the decision, and shall be final unless appealed pursuant to § 96.52 of this part. If post-hearing briefs were not permitted, the parties to the hearing will be given the opportunity to review and comment on the presiding officer's decision prior to its being issued.

(f) The presiding officer shall include as part of the decision a finding on the credibility of witnesses (other than expert witnesses) whenever credibility is a material issue.

(g) The presiding officer shall furnish a copy of the decision to the parties.

(h) The presiding officer has the power to take such actions and make such rulings as are necessary or appropriate to maintain order and to conduct a fair, expeditious, and impartial hearing, and to enforce the requirements of this subpart concerning the conduct of hearings. The presiding officer may direct that the hearing be conducted in any suitable manner permitted by law and these regulations.

(i) The Secretary or the presiding officer has the power to suspend, modify, or waive any provision of this subpart.