**Section 510.100 Informal Resolution Conference**

a) Every proceeding pursuant to this Section is to be confidential and not open to the general public unless the grievant so requests.

b) The Informal Resolution Conference is an informal review of the decision with the goal of mutually resolving the issues being appealed. Procedures set forth in the Code of Civil Procedures [735 ILCS 5] do not apply.

c) A grievant may request an Informal Resolution Conference, in the period between the filing of the appeal and the hearing decision, by contacting the office out of which the grievant receives services.

d) The grievant may choose to have a representative present at the conference.

e) If the grievance pertains to the customer's VR program or HSP, the supervisor of the DHS-ORS employee whose action is being grieved must schedule and chair the Informal Resolution Conference at a time and date convenient to all parties. For grievances by a blind vendor, the chair shall be the Administrator or that person's supervisor. The grievant must be notified of the name, address and telephone number of the DHS-ORS employee chairing the meeting. The informal resolution conference shall be held in the local DHS-ORS facility unless, in the request, the grievant indicates that due to the grievant's disability the grievant cannot attend at the local DHS-ORS facility. In this case the conference shall be held in the grievant's home.

f) During the Informal Resolution Conference the chair should:

1) initiate the conference with an opening statement explaining the purpose of the conference;

2) assist the parties in determining and clarifying the issues;

3) facilitate a fair and complete presentation and discussion of relevant information, both oral and written;

4) as appropriate, summarize the positions of the grievant and DHS-ORS;

5) provide an opportunity to discuss settlement or agree on a course of action; and

6) if no resolution is reached, assure the grievant is made aware of the next step of the appeal process.

g) The Informal Resolution Conference is concluded either with a mutually agreed upon resolution of the issue or some of the issues, or with the conclusion that the issues cannot be resolved and the grievance should proceed to hearing. At the conclusion of the informal resolution process, the DHS-ORS staff person chairing the conference shall reduce any mutually agreed upon resolutions to writing. The confirmation of the agreement must be signed by both the grievant and the chair. The confirmation must also include the agreement of the customer to withdraw the grievance on the agreed issues. The agreement should list all agreed issues and all outstanding issues. Unless circumstances prohibit, the agreement should be reduced to writing while all parties are still there. If all disputed issues are resolved, the parties should inform the Hearings Coordinator to withdraw the grievance.

h) Sessions held as a part of the informal resolution conference shall be scheduled in a timely manner and shall not deny or delay the grievant's right to pursue resolution of the dispute through an impartial hearing held within the applicable time period set out in this Part or any other right under this Part.

(Source: Amended at 27 Ill. Reg. 9576, effective June 13, 2003)