

§ 32.5

approved by the Secretary. An employee who arranges for a voluntary repayment schedule may nonetheless request a waiver of the overpayment under paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) *Waiver.* An employee seeking a waiver of collection of the debt that is authorized by law must request the waiver in writing to the Secretary within 10 days of receipt of the written notice under § 32.3. The employee must state why he or she believes a waiver should be granted.

(c) *Involuntary repayment schedule.* If the employee claims that the amount of the involuntary deduction will cause extreme financial hardship and should be reduced, he or she must submit a written explanation and a financial statement signed under oath or affirmation to the Secretary within 10 days of receipt of the written notice under § 32.3. An employee who fails to submit this financial information in a timely manner waives the right to object to the involuntary repayment schedule at a hearing under § 32.5. The Secretary notifies the employee, in writing, whether the Secretary will reduce the rate of the involuntary deduction.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5514; 31 U.S.C. 3716)

§ 32.5 Pre-offset hearing—general.

(a) An employee who wishes a review of the existence or amount of the overpayment or an involuntary repayment schedule may request a pre-offset hearing. The pre-offset hearing does not review:

(1) The denial of a waiver of repayment under 5 U.S.C. 5584;

(2) The involuntary repayment schedule or financial hardship caused by the amount of the involuntary deduction from the employee's disposable pay, unless the employee has submitted the financial statement and written explanation required under § 32.4(c); and

(3) The determination under paragraph (b) of this section that the pre-offset hearing is on the written submissions.

(b) Unless the Secretary determines that a matter reviewable under paragraph (a) of this section turns on an issue of credibility or veracity or cannot be resolved by a review of the documentary evidence, the pre-offset hearing is on the written submissions.

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(c) A pre-offset hearing is based on the written submissions for overpayments arising from:

(1) A termination of a temporary promotion;

(2) A cash award;

(3) An erroneous salary rate;

(4) Premature granting of a within-grade increase;

(5) A lump sum payment for annual leave;

(6) Unauthorized appointment to a position;

(7) An error on time and attendance records; or

(8) Other circumstances where the Secretary determines that an oral hearing is not required.

(d) The hearing is conducted by a hearing official who is not an employee of the Department or under the supervision or control of the Secretary.

(e) Formal discovery between the parties is not provided.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5514; 31 U.S.C. 3716)

§ 32.6 Request for a pre-offset hearing.

(a) Except for an employee who has requested a waiver of collection of the debt under § 32.4(b), an employee who wishes a pre-offset hearing must request the hearing within 15 days of receipt of the written notice given under § 32.3. The Secretary waives the 15-day requirement if the employee shows that the delay was because of circumstances beyond his or her control or because of failure to receive notice and lack of knowledge of the time limit.

(b) An employee who has requested a waiver under § 32.4(b) may request a hearing within 10 days of receipt of a determination by the Secretary denying a waiver.

(c) The request for a hearing must:

(1) Be in writing;

(2) State why the employee:

(i) Contests the existence or amount of the overpayment; or

(ii) Claims that the involuntary repayment schedule will cause extreme financial hardship;

(3) Include all documents on which the employee is relying, other than those provided by the Secretary under § 32.3; any document which is a statement of an individual must be in the form of an affidavit; and

(4) Be submitted to the designated hearing official with a copy to the Secretary.

(d) If the employee timely requests a pre-offset hearing or the timelines are waived under paragraph (a) of this section, the Secretary:

(1) Notifies the employee whether the employee may elect an oral hearing; and

(2) Provides the hearing official with a copy of all records on which the determination of the overpayment and any involuntary repayment schedule are based.

(e) An employee who has been given the opportunity to elect an oral hearing and who does elect an oral hearing must notify the hearing official and the Secretary of his or her election in writing within 7 days of receipt of the notice under paragraph (d)(1) of this section and must identify all proposed witnesses and all facts and evidence about which they will testify.

(f) Where an employee requests an oral hearing, the hearing official notifies the Secretary and the employee of the date, time, and location of the hearing. However:

(1) The employee subsequently may elect to have the hearing based only on the written submissions by notifying the hearing official and the Secretary at least 3 calendar days before the date of the oral hearing. The hearing official may waive the 3-day requirement for good cause when the employee notifies the hearing official before the date of the hearing; and

(2) The request for a hearing of an employee who fails to appear at the oral hearing must be dismissed and the Secretary's decision affirmed.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5514; 31 U.S.C. 3716)

§ 32.7 Pre-offset oral hearing.

(a) Oral hearings are informal in nature. The Secretary and the employee, through their representatives, and by reference to the documentation submitted, explain their case. The employee may testify on his or her own behalf, subject to cross examination. Other witnesses may be called to testify only where the hearing official determines that their testimony is relevant and not redundant.

(b) The hearing official shall:

(1) Conduct a fair and impartial hearing; and

(2) Preside over the course of the hearing, maintain decorum, and avoid delay in the disposition of the hearing.

(c) The employee may represent himself or herself or may be represented by another person at the hearing. The employee may not be represented by a person whose representation creates an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

(d) Oral hearings are open to the public. However, the hearing official may close all or any portion of the hearing where to do so is in the best interests of the employee or the public.

(e) Oral hearings may be conducted by conference call—

(1) If the employee is located in a city outside the Washington, DC Metropolitan area;

(2) At the request of the employee; or

(3) At the discretion of the hearing official.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5514; 31 U.S.C. 3716)

§ 32.8 Pre-offset hearing on the written submissions.

If a hearing is to be held on the written submissions, the hearing official reviews the records and responses submitted by the Secretary and the employee under § 32.6.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5514; 31 U.S.C. 3716)

§ 32.9 Written decision.

(a) The hearing official issues a written decision stating the facts supporting the nature and origin of the debt and the hearing official's analysis, findings and conclusions as to the amount of the debt and the repayment schedule within 60 days of filing of the employee's request for a pre-offset hearing, unless the employee requests, and the hearing official grants, a delay in the proceedings.

(b) The hearing official decides whether the Secretary's determination of the existence and the amount of the overpayment or the extreme financial hardship caused by the involuntary repayment schedule is clearly erroneous. A determination is clearly erroneous if although there is evidence to support the determination, the hearing official, considering the record as a whole, is