

in § 780.11, the decision has been mediated, the decision has previously been reconsidered, or the decision-maker is the Administrator, Deputy Administrator, or other FSA official outside FSA's informal appeals process.

(d) A request for reconsideration will be deemed withdrawn if a participant requests mediation or appeals to a higher reviewing authority within FSA or requests an appeal by NAD before a request for reconsideration has been acted upon.

(e) The Federal Rules of Evidence do not apply to reconsiderations. Proceedings may be confined to presentations of evidence to material facts, and evidence or questions that are irrelevant, unduly repetitious, or otherwise inappropriate may be excluded.

(f) The official decision on reconsideration will be the decision letter that is issued following disposition of the reconsideration request.

(g) A decision on reconsideration is a new decision that restarts applicable time limitations periods under § 780.15 and part 11 of this title.

[70 FR 43266, July 27, 2005, as amended at 71 FR 30573, May 30, 2006]

§ 780.8 County committee appeals.

(a) A request for appeal to a county committee concerning a decision of a subordinate of the county committee must be submitted by a participant or by a participant's authorized representative in writing and must be addressed to the office in which the subordinate is employed.

(b) The Federal Rules of Evidence do not apply to appeals to a county committee. However, a county committee may confine presentations of evidence to material facts and may exclude evidence or questions that are irrelevant, unduly repetitious, or otherwise inappropriate.

(c) The official county committee decision on an appeal will be the decision letter that is issued following disposition of the appeal.

(d) Deliberations shall be in confidence except to the extent that a county committee may request the assistance of county committee or FSA employees during deliberations.

§ 780.9 Mediation.

(a) Any request for mediation must be submitted after issuance of an adverse decision but before any hearing in an appeal of the adverse decision to NAD.

(b) An adverse decision and any particular issues of fact material to an adverse decision may be mediated only once:

(1) If resolution of an adverse decision is not achieved in mediation, a participant may exercise any remaining appeal rights under this part or appeal to NAD in accordance with part 11 of this title and NAD procedures.

(2) If an adverse decision is modified as a result of mediation, a participant may exercise any remaining appeal rights as to the modified decision under this part or appeal to NAD, unless such appeal rights have been waived pursuant to agreement in the mediation.

(c) Any agreement reached during, or as a result of, the mediation process shall conform to the statutory and regulatory provisions governing the program and FSA's generally applicable interpretation of those statutes and regulatory provisions.

(d) FSA will participate in mediation in good faith and to do so will take steps that include the following:

(1) Designating a representative in the mediation;

(2) Instructing the representative that any agreement reached during, or as a result of, the mediation process must conform to the statutes, regulations, and FSA's generally applicable interpretations of statutes and regulations governing the program;

(3) Assisting as necessary in making pertinent records available for review and discussion during the mediation; and

(4) Directing the representative to forward any written agreement proposed in mediation to the appropriate FSA official for approval.

(e) Mediations will be treated in a confidential manner consistent with the purposes of the mediation.

(f) For requests for mediation in a Certified State, if the factual issues implicated in an adverse decision have not previously been mediated, notice to a participant of an adverse decision