

**MENDOCINO COUNTY
EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION**

**PROCEDURES FOR
DISABILITY RETIREMENT APPLICATIONS
AND FORMAL HEARINGS**



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Procedures For Disability Retirement Applications And Formal Hearings

The purpose of these procedures are to expeditiously process applications for disability retirement benefits under the County Employees' Retirement Law of 1937 (CERL) and when a hearing is to be held, the APPLICANT will have notice of the hearing and an opportunity to appear and present his or her case.

Rule 1. Definitions

In these Rules, unless the context or subject matter otherwise requires:

(a) "APPLICANT" means a member of the Mendocino County Employees' Retirement Association claiming disability retirement benefits under the County Employees' Retirement Law of 1937, or any person or persons entitled to claim such benefits as a result of the death of a member.

(b) "Board" means the Board of Retirement of the Mendocino County Employees' Retirement Association.

(c) Deny or dismiss the application "with prejudice" means the application is denied and the member will not be allowed to refile a disability application as to that injury or impairment.

(d) "Disability" or "disabled", whether used singly or in combination with other words, means permanent incapacity for performance of duty.

(e) "Medical Advisor" to the Board shall mean a third party medical professional designated by the Association.

(f) "Permanent incapacity for the performance of duty" means an impairment of the member's body and/or mind, which causes the member to be unable to perform those duties essential to the performance of the job classification last held by the member, or the duties of a

permanent light duty position within the member's abilities and within the member's department or a successor department, when it is determined by competent medical evidence that the impairment is permanent or of such prolonged and uncertain duration as to be considered permanent. A member need not be able to perform each and every duty of the member's position, but if the member is permanently unable to perform any essential duty of the former classification, the member shall be deemed to be incapacitated. A member is not considered to be permanently incapacitated when the member unreasonably refuses medical treatment (including surgery) or other remedial treatment available in California if the probabilities are great that such treatment will restore the member to capacity within a reasonable period of time and the risk of harm from such treatment would not deter a reasonable person from submitting to the same.

(g) "Retirement Administrator" means the person designated by the Board as its Retirement Administrator or his/her designee.

(h) "Retirement Association" or "Association" means the Mendocino County Employees' Retirement Association.

(i) "Duties" means the essential functions of the job that are functions which the individual who holds the position must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodations.

Rule 2. Forms

All forms to be used in proceedings under these Rules shall be first approved by the Retirement Administrator. Whenever forms are available for use, they shall, insofar as possible, be used by all interested parties. Most of the forms used in the disability process can be found in the MCERA Disability Retirement Application Handbook.

Rule 3. **Filing Of Application**

The Retirement Administrator shall furnish a copy of these Rules and a copy of the Disability Retirement Application Handbook to any person upon request. An application will not be accepted for filing until all forms, as described in these Rules and the disability retirement APPLICANT handbook have been completely filled out in accordance with these Rules and the instructions stated in the application forms; verified under oath or penalty of perjury by the person making the application in the presence of the Retirement Administrator or the Retirement Administrator's designated staff member or verified by a notary public; and submitted to the Retirement Administrator. Any attempt to file an application or document in support of the application that is incomplete or illegible shall not be accepted by the Retirement Administrator. An application must include the member's home address and telephone number, an attorney's address and telephone number is not sufficient. It is the responsibility of the APPLICANT and Applicant's attorney to notify the Board of Retirement of any change of address and/or telephone number. The Retirement Administrator will also not accept an application for filing unless it is accompanied by the Attending or Forensic Physician's Report pursuant to Rule 5.

The Board is interested in receiving and reviewing all competent and relevant evidence including medical reports filed by physicians in Workers' Compensation proceedings, but it is emphasized that in light of the different considerations involved in retirement proceedings as distinguished from Workers' Compensation proceedings, the Board of Retirement and its hearing officer are not bound or precluded in any way by Workers' Compensation evidence, admissions, stipulations, findings or conclusions.

Any application filed more than four months after a member's discontinuance of service must include a statement by the member's attending physician on the Attending or Forensic

Physician's Report that indicates the member has been continuously physically or mentally incapacitated to perform his or her duties since the date of the member's discontinuance of service to the time of the application.

Rule 4. **Administrative Processing**

At the time of furnishing the application forms, the Retirement Administrator shall notify the APPLICANT of the following requirements:

(a) The APPLICANT is required to obtain and to file with the Retirement Administrator, in the form prescribed in Rule 5 and an "Attending Physician's Report", which states that in the physician's opinion the APPLICANT is permanently incapacitated from doing those duties which are essential to the performance of the position last held by the APPLICANT, together with any and all other relevant evidence in the form of written medical reports, certificates or other documents which the APPLICANT wishes the Board to consider in support of the application. Processing the application will not commence until the application is both complete and timely as determined by the Retirement Administrator, and has been properly filed as described in Rule 3 above.

(b) The APPLICANT is required to report at times and places specified by the Retirement Administrator and the Managed Medical Review Organization Incorporated (MMRO) for one (1) or more medical examination(s) by a physician or physicians selected by the Board or the Retirement Administrator.

(c) If the application contends that the permanent incapacity for the performance of duties is the result of injury or disease arising out of and in the course of employment, the APPLICANT may be required by the Retirement Administrator or his/her designee, to be interviewed relative to the factual circumstances of the cause of such injury or disease.

The APPLICANT shall authorize the release of all medical records, personnel records and Workers' Compensation files.

The Retirement Administrator shall: (1) Forward a "Department Statement of Facts and Circumstances" to the APPLICANT'S employer for completion. The Department Statement of Facts and Circumstances shall include a detailed statement of all action and efforts undertaken to find alternative employment for the employee within the department within the capacity of the employee to perform, and the results of such action and efforts, or a detailed explanation as to why such efforts were not undertaken; and;

(2) Request, from County Human Resources copies of all claims and medical reports filed by the APPLICANT for Workers' Compensation benefits; and

(3) Forward an "Immediate Supervisor Statement" to the APPLICANT'S last known supervisor.

The Retirement Administrator will, if appropriate, notify the APPLICANT at the address given in the application of the date, time and place the APPLICANT shall report for medical examination and advise the APPLICANT of the name of the person who will arrange to interview the APPLICANT.

The failure of an APPLICANT to diligently pursue or prosecute an application may result in the dismissal of the application. Diligently pursuing or prosecuting an application includes, but is not limited to: timely submission of any and all written documentation requested by the Board; compliance with lawful instructions of the Board; and cooperation with the staff in obtaining information pertinent to the application. Prior to dismissal of an application for failure to diligently pursue or prosecute, APPLICANT shall be given notice and an opportunity to respond.

Rule 5. Attending Physician's Report

The APPLICANT, at his own expense, shall obtain a medical examination by a duly

licensed physician of APPLICANT'S choice. When the Retirement Association notifies the APPLICANT of the requirements in Rule 4, it shall also provide the APPLICANT with the following documents which are to be delivered by the APPLICANT to his/her physician as follows:

- (a) "Attending Physician's Report";
- (b) Letter of instruction to physicians for APPLICANT and physician guidelines;
- (c) Job Class specification and/or job description and essential functions list from the APPLICANT'S employer for the position held by APPLICANT.

Rule 6. Medical Evaluation By Board Physician and/or Medical Advisor

The Managed Medical Review Organization Incorporated (MMRO) may arrange an appointment(s) with the physician or physicians so selected by the Board of Retirement for an examination of the APPLICANT and notify the APPLICANT as specified in Rule 4(b).

The Medical Advisor shall advise the Board on medical matter; as requested.

Rule 7. Application Filed On Behalf Of A Member

Pursuant to the authority provided in Government Code section 31721(a), an application may be filed on behalf of a member of the Mendocino County Employees' Retirement Association by any other person, including the head of the department or office employing the member. For purposes of this section, 'APPLICANT' shall mean the person or entity filing the application claiming disability benefits on behalf of a member of MCERA.

The application must be accompanied by other medical documentation identifying the nature and extent of the disability (including physical limitations, if the disability is a result of physical limitation); evidencing the existence of a permanent incapacity which incapacitates the member on whose behalf the application is filed from the performance of the normal job duties of his/her classification; and describing the professional capacity of the author of the documentation

in rendering the opinions (e.g., treating physician, fitness for duty evaluator, Agreed Medical Examiner, Qualified Medical Examiner, etc.), together with any and all other relevant evidence in the form of written medical reports, certificates, or other documents which the APPLICANT wishes the Board to consider in support of the application.

As provided in Government Code section 31721(b), the APPLICANT (the person filing on behalf of the member) has the burden of proving that the member is permanently incapacitated for the performance of his or her job duties. Thereafter, the member has the burden of proving job causation

(a) Upon receipt of an application filed on behalf of a member by any person other than the member, the Retirement Administrator shall, within five (5) calendar days, mail a copy of the application to the member at the member's home address on file with the Retirement Administrator and a statement advising the member of the procedures that will be followed in processing the application and further advising the member of his or her rights, including:

- 1) The right to provide medical and other evidence contesting the assertion that the member is permanently incapacitated for the performance of his or her job duties; and
- 2) The right to provide medical and other evidence showing that, if the Board determines that the member is permanently incapacitated, the disability arose out of and in the course of his or her job duties. The member specifically shall be advised that it is his or her burden to prove job causation.

The Retirement Administrator and the Managed Medical Review Organization Incorporated (MMRO) may require the member to be examined by an independent medical examiner appointed by the Board of Retirement. However, if the member refuses or fails to be examined, the Board may make its determination based on those medical reports provided by the

APPLICANT and the member, notwithstanding the provisions of Rule 6, herein; or the Board may deny the application.

(b) It shall be the responsibility of the person filing the application to provide to the Board medical reports supporting its application. At the request of the person filing the application, the Retirement Administrator shall issue subpoenas or subpoenas duces tecum pursuant to Government Code section 31535 and Rule 12.

(c) The member on whose behalf benefits are claimed shall be advised of the time and place of the Board's initial determination review on the application. Hearings on applications filed pursuant to this Rule 6 shall be held in closed session.

(d) Within five (5) calendar days after the Board action on the application, the Retirement Administrator shall notify the person filing the application and the member on whose behalf disability retirement benefits are claimed of the Board action. Both the APPLICANT and the member shall have the right to request a hearing as provided in Rule 11.

Rule 8. **Investigation Of Facts**

When it is contended by the APPLICANT that a permanent incapacity for the performance of the APPLICANT'S duties resulted from an injury or disease arising out of and in the course of employment, the Retirement Administrator may arrange for an appointment with a staff member or an investigator to interview the APPLICANT and notify the APPLICANT as required in Rule 4(c). The investigator shall be employed to make a factual investigation of the factual circumstances surrounding the cause of the injury or disease. Any APPLICANT has the right to have a representative present during any interview of the APPLICANT by the investigator retained by the Board of Retirement. The investigation shall not necessarily be limited to the interview with the APPLICANT and records of employment. The investigator shall make a report

to the Retirement Administrator of the result of that investigation.

Rule 9. **Administrative Reports**

After receipt of all requested documents, the Retirement Administrator shall make a written report to the Board as follows:

(a) Whether or not the file is sufficient to support a finding by the Board as to whether or not the APPLICANT is permanently incapacitated for the performance of his/her duties.

(b) In the case of an application for a service connected disability, that the file is sufficient to support a finding by the Board as to whether or not the incapacity was the result of an injury or disease arising out of and in the course of employment.

(c) In the case of an application for non-service connected disability retirement, the Retirement Administrator shall report to the Board whether or not the APPLICANT has served the required period of time that entitles the APPLICANT to a non-service connected disability benefit and, if so, that the disability is not due to: intemperate use of alcoholic liquor or drugs, willful misconduct or violation of law; and for APPLICANTS who become members of the system on or after January 1, 1988, that this disability is not due to conviction of a felony or criminal activity which caused or resulted in APPLICANT's disability. See Government Code sections 31726, 31726.5.

The report of the Retirement Administrator shall be in writing and shall include all reports and records, including but not limited to, medical evidence in support of the application as evaluated by the Board's Medical Advisor. When the medical records and other documents submitted in support of the application are insufficient or in conflict or if the Retirement Administrator is not satisfied with the investigative report and other pertinent documents, he/she

shall report to the Board in what respects the application is deemed to be insufficient.

Rule 10. **Board Initial Determination**

(a) Disability retirement applications shall be considered by the Board in a four-step process, based on the evidence presented.

1) Determination of whether the member is permanently incapacitated for the performance of assigned duties, and, if so, the injury or disease that constitutes the permanent incapacity. If permanent incapacity is not found, the application shall be denied.

2) Determination of whether the incapacity is a result of injury or disease arising out of and in the course of the member's employment for the County or district.

3) Determination of whether a medical examination following retirement shall be required. This determination shall be made for members under age 55. See Government Code section 31729.

4) Determination of the effective date of disability retirement, see Government Code section 31724.

Within three (3) calendar days after the initial Board action on the application, the Retirement Administrator shall notify the APPLICANT at the address shown in the application of the Board action and, if the action of the Board denies in whole or part any of the benefits sought in the application, the notice shall advise the APPLICANT of his/her right to request a hearing.

Upon request, an applicant may address the Board at the initial determination review regarding his/her disability retirement application either personally or through counsel.

Rule 11. **Hearings**

When requested by an APPLICANT, hearings shall be scheduled and conducted in the

following manner:

(a) Request by APPLICANT. An APPLICANT may request a hearing of an initial determination by filing a request for a hearing with the Board of Retirement not later than the thirtieth (30th) day following the determination of the Board. Such request must be in writing and contain a statement indicating the retirement benefit(s) which the APPLICANT or the member is seeking to obtain through the administrative review process.

(b) Selection of Hearing Officer. The Board may designate a panel of hearing officers at the beginning of each calendar year. . New cases will be assigned to the hearing officer on a rotational basis.. When a timely request for a hearing is filed by an APPLICANT and the case is ready for formal hearing as determined by the Board's counsel, written notice of the hearing officer assignment, from the predetermined panel, shall be sent by the Board, to the Board's counsel and to the APPLICANT'S attorney, or the APPLICANT if not represented by counsel. The APPLICANT and the Board's counsel shall have ten (10) calendar days from the date of mailing of the notice of the hearing officer assignment to exercise, in writing, a peremptory challenge. If either party exercises its challenge, the hearing officer's card is placed in the back of the card file and the hearing officer whose card is next in the file shall be assigned the case. The other party will then have ten (10) calendar days from the date of mailing of the notice of the new assignment to exercise, in writing, a peremptory challenge. Only one peremptory challenge may be exercised by a party. When the hearing officer selection is finally made the hearing officer will be notified of his/her selection. The hearing officer's card will then be placed in the back of the card file.

(c) Setting of Hearing Date. The hearing officer has 180 calendar days from the date of notification of selection as hearing officer to hold and complete the formal hearing. The hearing

officer will coordinate the hearing date with all parties and set the dates when the prehearing statements are due, consistent with Rules 12 and 13, and set the cut-off date for requests to subpoena witnesses, consistent with Rule 14.

(d) Continuances. Once a hearing date has been set by the hearing officer, any request for a continuance must be in writing to the hearing officer.

(e) Reporter. The proceedings of all hearings for disability retirement shall be reported by a stenographic reporter unless waived in writing by all interested parties. The stenographic report of the proceedings shall be transcribed only if requested by a party and, if so, the party requesting the same shall pay for the cost. In addition to stenographic reporting, any party may video tape all or part of the proceedings, and, if so, that party shall pay the cost thereof.

(f) Representation by Counsel. An APPLICANT may be represented by legal counsel at any hearing. Before an attorney appears on behalf of an APPLICANT, a written authorization from the APPLICANT shall be filed with the Retirement Administrator. After an attorney appears on behalf of an APPLICANT pursuant to the written authorization of representation, all notices and evidence shall thereafter be served upon such counsel.

Rule 12. Board of Retirement's Prehearing Statement

The Board's counsel shall serve upon the hearing officer and the APPLICANT a prehearing statement no later than sixty (60) calendar days before the date of the hearing. The prehearing statement shall contain the following:

- (a) A statement of the contested issues;
- (b) A list and copies of all documentary evidence that respondent will offer into evidence;
- (c) The names, business addresses and telephone numbers of any lay witnesses

whose testimony the Board's counsel intends to present at the hearing, and a synopsis of the expected testimony of each witness;

(d) The names of any medical witnesses the Board's counsel intends to call for oral testimony at a hearing or hearings for that purpose and a synopsis of the expected testimony;

If APPLICANT'S prehearing statement, as described below in Rule 13, raises issues or identifies witnesses not in the Board's counsel's prehearing statement, the Board's counsel, in that event shall then serve upon the hearing officer and the APPLICANT a supplemental prehearing statement no later than fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of mailing of APPLICANT'S prehearing statement (no later than thirty (30) days before the hearing) in the format prescribed above.

A request for an extension of time to submit a prehearing statement or a supplemental prehearing statement should only be granted upon a showing of good cause and should be granted for no more than five (5) calendar days. A request for an extension of time should be served on the hearing officer and opposing counsel, or, if no counsel, then served on the opposing party.

Rule 13. APPLICANT'S Prehearing Statement

The APPLICANT shall serve upon the hearing officer and the Board's counsel a prehearing statement no later than fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of mailing of respondent's prehearing statement (no later than forty-five (45) days before the hearing). The prehearing statement shall contain the following:

- (a) A statement of the contested issues;
- (b) A list and copies of all documentary evidence that APPLICANT will offer into evidence;

(c) The names, business addresses and telephone numbers of any lay witnesses whose testimony the APPLICANT intends to present at the hearing, and a synopsis of the expected testimony of each witness;

(d) The names of any medical witnesses the APPLICANT intends to call for oral testimony at a hearing or hearings set for that purpose and a synopsis of the expected testimony;

(e) The names of any medical witnesses the APPLICANT intends to depose, consistent with Rule 18.

If the APPLICANT alleges in the prehearing statement or at any time during the administrative appeal process that the incapacity is the result of an injury or disease not listed on the application submitted to the Board, or if listed, upon which the APPLICANT submitted no medical evidence for the Board's review when it considered the application, the administrative appeal shall be suspended, the allegation shall be treated as an amendment to the application and the matter shall be referred back to the Board for its original determination on the application. In all other respects an application returned to the Board of Retirement shall be processed in accordance with these rules, as if it were a new application consistent with the scheduling and prehearing statement requirements of Rules 11, 12, 13 and 14.

A request for an extension of time to submit a prehearing statement should only be granted upon a showing of good cause and should be granted for no more than five (5) calendar days. A request for an extension of time shall be served on the hearing officer and opposing counsel, or, if no counsel, then served on the opposing party.\

Rule 14. Subpoena Cut-Off Date

Any party may request that the Board issue a subpoena for a witness, but such requests must be made in writing, consistent with Rule 24. Written requests for subpoenas must be

received by the Board no less than thirty (30) calendar days before the date of the hearing. No subpoena will issue upon a request received after this date. All subpoenas shall be served upon the prospective witness no later than fifteen (15) calendar days before the hearing.

Rule 15. Time And Place Of Hearings

Unless the parties and the hearing officer agree otherwise, a hearing shall be deemed set for one full day (i.e., a morning session and an afternoon session). Morning sessions shall begin at 9:30 A.M. and end at 12:00 noon, and afternoon sessions shall begin at 1:30 P.M. and end at 5:00 P.M. Hearings which are not concluded within either the full day (i.e. a morning and an afternoon) session, or whatever other time period to which there has been a stipulation, shall be continued to the next agreeable hearing date. When the hearing date and time have been selected, the Board of Retirement staff shall arrange for a reporter and use of a hearing room and shall in writing notify the parties and the hearing officer of the time and place of the hearing.

Rule 16. Penalties For Failure To Comply With Requirements Of The Rules

(a) Failure of the APPLICANT to submit to medical examinations by a physician or physicians selected by the Board of Retirement, as prescribed in Rule 4 above, shall be treated as noncooperation may result in dismissal of the application.

(b) Failure of a party to raise an issue in the prehearing statement as prescribed in Rules 12 and 13 shall be treated as a waiver of that issue for further consideration by the hearing officer and the Board.

(c) Failure of the APPLICANT to cooperate in completing the formal hearing record, consistent with Rule 11, including, but not limited to: submitting all testimonial and documentary evidence and closing the record within 180 days of the selection of the hearing officer, will result in the case being returned to the Board. If the Board subsequently determines that the APPLICANT did not cooperate in completing the formal hearing record, as described above, the

Board may dismiss the application. (d) Failure of a party to make a written request to subpoena a witness no less than thirty (30) calendar days before the hearing date, consistent with Rule 14, shall be treated as a waiver of the right to compel the attendance of that witness to the hearing.

(e) Failure of a party to serve a subpoena on a witness no later than fifteen (15) calendar days before the hearing may be treated by the hearing officer and Board as a waiver of the right to compel the attendance of that witness to the hearing.

(f) Failure of a party to advance the expert witness fee, consistent with Rule 18, shall be treated by the hearing officer and the Board as a waiver of the right to compel the attendance of that expert witness to the hearing.

(g) Failure of a party to serve a subpoena on a witness no less than fifteen (15) calendar days before the hearing, consistent with Rule 14, shall be treated by the hearing officer and the Board as a waiver of the right to compel attendance of that witness at the hearing.

(h) Failure of the APPLICANT, after appeal from the Board's initial decision, to comply with the requirements set forth in these rules as to time and discovery, shall be treated as non-cooperation. In that event, no formal hearing shall be scheduled or conducted and the application will be returned to the Board. If the Board subsequently determines that the APPLICANT did not cooperate in the appeal process, as described above, the Board may dismiss the application.

(i) No testimony of a witness or documentary evidence not identified in a prehearing statement shall be allowed into evidence at the formal hearing, except as prescribed in Rules 12, 17 or 19.

(j) Failure of the APPLICANT to submit to an interview by the Board's investigator, as prescribed in Rule 8 above, shall be treated as non-cooperation and the application shall be sent

to the Board. If the Board subsequently determines that the APPLICANT did not cooperate with the Board of Retirement's Investigator in completing the interview, as prescribed in Rule 8, the Board may dismiss the application.

(k) If the Board determines that an APPLICANT has offered an incomplete application and has failed to complete the application pursuant to these Rules, within 12 months of offering an incomplete application to Retirement Administrator or the Retirement Administrator's designee, the Board shall dismiss the application..

(l) Any dismissal of an application with prejudice by the Board pursuant to Rule 16 is a final administrative decision and subject to judicial review as proscribed in Rule 35.

Rule 17. Written Medical Reports As Evidence

(a) Statement of Policy: It is policy of the Board that production of medical evidence shall be in the form of written medical reports attached to the parties' prehearing statements. A written medical report bearing the signature of the medical witness shall be admissible in evidence as the author's direct testimony and shall support findings made by the Board or the hearing officer. Such medical reports shall not be inadmissible on the basis that they constitute hearsay, but each party shall have the right to cross-examine the authors of medical reports. In addition, such medical reports when offered as expert opinions shall not be inadmissible on the basis that the author of the medical report was called as a percipient witness and not as an expert witness and did not attend the hearing.

(b) "Medical Witness" Defined: A medical witness is a person who by profession is a physician, surgeon, holding an M.D. or D.O. degree, psychologist, optometrist, dentist, podiatrist, or chiropractic practitioner, licensed by the State of California.

(c) Late Submission Of Medical Reports: Submission of a medical report subsequent

to the filing of the party's prehearing statement shall be allowed only upon a showing of good cause. The party requesting submission of such a medical report shall address the request to the hearing officer assigned the case and send a copy of the request to opposing counsel, or, if no counsel, then to the opposing party. The request shall state the reason the medical report was not timely produced. The hearing officer shall have the power to rule on such a request.

"Good Cause" shall include an opportunity to have a medical witness comment in a written report on testimony produced at a hearing.

However, if the medical report is allowed to be submitted into evidence, the other party shall have the right to a continuance to engage in further discovery, obtain rebuttal medical evidence and/ or to cross-examine the medical witness.

Rule 18. Oral Testimony Of Medical Witnesses

(a) Hearings: Oral testimony of a medical witness on direct or cross-examination, for purpose of the hearing, may be taken at a hearing set at a reasonable time as requested by the medical witness in the office of the medical witness, or such other reasonable place requested by the medical witness. If the parties and the hearing officer so agree, the hearing officer need not attend such a hearing and the hearing officer shall consider the transcript of the testimony of a medical witness as evidence in reaching the recommended decision. Hearings for oral testimony of medical witnesses for any purpose shall take place before the first day of the formal hearing.

(b) Depositions: The deposition of a medical witness may be taken before the hearing officer. The deposition shall be scheduled at a reasonable time as requested by the medical witness. The deposition shall take place in the office of the medical witness, or such other reasonable place as requested by the medical witness. Depositions of medical witnesses for any purpose shall be taken before the first day of the formal hearing.

(c) Subpoenas and Fees: (1) Issuance of a subpoena for a medical witness's attendance at a hearing or deposition shall be contingent on the party accepting the obligation to pay the medical witness.

The party requesting the oral testimony shall contact the office of the medical witness and determine the witness's reasonable and customary hourly fee and shall advise the office of the medical witness of the anticipated length of the deposition or hearing as to hours in duration. An agreement on the medical witness's fee, based on the witness's reasonable customary rate and anticipated length of the testimony, shall be entered into with the medical witness at least ten (10) days in advance of the deposition or hearing. If a balance is due following the testimony, the party requesting the oral testimony shall pay the balance upon receipt of an itemized statement. Disputes as to fees between the medical witness and the party requesting the oral testimony shall be resolved by the hearing officer.

2) Failure to serve a subpoena and/or pay the prescribed witness fee in advance may be treated by the hearing officer and Board as a waiver of the right to question such witness. Failure to enter into an advance agreement to pay to an expert witness fee may be deemed a waiver of the right to question the expert witness or to require the expert witness's appearance at the deposition or hearing and any subpoena which may have been issued to compel the expert witness's attendance shall be canceled and shall be of no further force or effect. Service of the subpoena and payment of the fee may be made by mail if the witness so agrees.

Rule 19. Testimony of Witnesses Without Notice

Upon written request made to the hearing officer with a copy sent to opposing counsel, or, if no counsel, then to the opposing party, a witness not listed in the prehearing statement may be

called to testify provided the party making the request presents a synopsis of the expected testimony and a showing that this witness will testify to matters the party did not know about or could not have reasonably known about at the time the prehearing statement was due.

The hearing officer shall have the power to rule on the request. If the witness is allowed to testify, the adverse party shall have the right to a continuance to obtain rebuttal evidence and/or to cross examine the witness. The party originally calling the witness to testify shall bear the responsibility of insuring the witness's attendance at a further hearing set for the witness's cross-examination. But even if a continuance is granted, the hearing officer's jurisdiction to hear and complete the case will not extend past 180 days from the notification of selection as hearing officer.

Rule 20. Depositions Of Lay Witnesses

Any party to the proceeding may cause the depositions of lay witnesses to be taken in the manner prescribed by law for depositions in civil actions in the superior courts of this state. Attendance of lay witnesses and the production of records in regard to depositions may be required and appropriate subpoenas will be issued by the Board. The parties shall bear their own costs for such depositions. Depositions of lay witnesses must be scheduled and taken before the formal hearing. Depositions of medical witnesses shall be governed by Rule 18.

Rule 21. Resolution Of Disputes In Regard To Discovery And Hearing Procedure

Disputes in regard to depositions and other discovery and hearing procedure shall be resolved by the hearing officer. If not made at a hearing, a request for resolution of a dispute shall be made in writing and may be supported by declarations, a copy of the deposition transcript if appropriate, a memorandum of points and authorities and a proposed resolution. The other party and the witness involved shall have ten (10) calendar days from the date of the mailing of

such a request in which to respond. The response may be accompanied by declarations, a copy of the deposition transcript if appropriate, a memorandum of points and authorities and a proposed resolution.

The hearing officer shall notify the parties and the witness involved of the hearing officer's resolution of the dispute within twenty (20) calendar days from the date of mailing of the request for resolution of the dispute.

Rule 22. Enforcement Of Right Of Discovery And Compelling Testimony

If a deponent or witness refuses to appear at a deposition or hearing, refuses to answer questions or otherwise obstructs discovery contrary to the resolution made by the hearing officer, upon the request of either party supported by a declaration as to the facts with proof of service on the adverse parties and the deponent or witness, and upon the hearing officer's determination that good cause has been shown therefore, the hearing officer shall refer the matter to the Board with a recommendation that the deponent or witness be held in contempt and that a report of the fact be made by the chairman to a judge of the superior court under the provisions of California Government Code sections 31535 and 25170 - 25175. The hearing officer shall serve his/her recommendation on the parties and the deponent or witness. The deponent or witness shall be personally served with a subpoena to attend the hearing before the Board in regard to contempt, a copy of the request of the moving party, the hearing officer's recommendation, and a notice that the Board will consider the hearing officer's recommendation following the deponent or witness being given an opportunity to be heard.

Rule 23. Prehearing Conferences; Unrepresented APPLICANTS

If either the Board's counsel, the APPLICANT, or the hearing officer so desires, there may be a prehearing conference by telephone for the purpose of conducting a general discussion of

the formal hearing procedures, and attempting a reconciliation of any dispute to include attempting to agree or to obtain the hearing officer's ruling on a dispute as to the admissibility or inadmissibility of evidence.

Rule 24. Subpoenas

The chair of the Board or the Retirement Administrator are authorized to issue and sign subpoenas for attendance at Board hearings on disability retirement applications, upon request of the APPLICANT or member, the APPLICANT'S or member's attorney, the person filing on behalf of the member pursuant to Rule 7, and the Board's counsel.

Rule 25. Further Medical And Lay Evidence On Behalf Of Respondent

At the request of the Board's counsel and with concurrence of the Retirement Administrator, the Board of Retirement 's disability retirement staff may obtain independent medical examinations and/or investigations. The fees for these medical examinations and/or investigations shall be paid by the Board.

The APPLICANT shall submit to examinations by physicians appointed by the Board's disability retirement staff. Such examinations shall be scheduled with due consideration to the APPLICANT'S convenience and ability to attend. If examinations occur further than 75 miles from the home of the Applicant, the Applicant can request reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses, as determined and approved by the Board of Retirement.

Rule 26. Evidence

- (a) An APPLICANT has the burden of going forward and the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the APPLICANT is entitled to the requested benefit.
- (b) Oral evidence shall be taken only on oath or affirmation.
- (c) Each party shall have these rights: to call and examine witnesses; to introduce

exhibits, to include reports and depositions of medical witnesses; to cross-examine opposing witnesses on any matter relevant to the issues even though that matter was not covered in the direct examination; to impeach any witness regardless of which party first called the witness to testify; and to rebut adverse evidence. If the APPLICANT does not testify, the APPLICANT may be called and examined as if under cross-examination. Refusal of any APPLICANT to submit to examination for the purpose of answering relevant questions shall be grounds for dismissing the application with prejudice.

(d) Hearsay evidence may be used for the purpose of supplementing or explaining other evidence but shall not be sufficient in itself to support a finding unless it would be admissible over objection in civil actions. This section shall not be applicable to written medical reports received into evidence pursuant to Rule 17.

(e) The hearing need not be conducted according to technical rules relating to evidence and witnesses. Any relevant evidence shall be admitted if it is the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely in the conduct of serious affairs, regardless of the existence of any common law or statutory rule which might make improper the admission of such evidence over objection in civil actions. The rules of privilege shall be effective to the extent that they are otherwise required by statute to be recognized at the hearing, and irrelevant and unduly repetitious evidence shall be excluded.

(f) Affidavits. A party may include as part of the party's prehearing statement a copy of any affidavit which the party proposes to introduce in evidence. The affidavit, if introduced in evidence, shall be given the same effect as if the affiant had testified orally. If an opportunity to cross-examine an affiant is not afforded after timely subpoena is requested and served as herein provided, the affidavit may be introduced in evidence, but shall be given only the same effect as

other hearsay evidence.

(g) Official Notice. In reaching a decision, the hearing officer shall take official notice of those matters which must be judicially noticed pursuant to section 451 of the California Evidence Code, may take official notice of those matters which may be judicially noticed pursuant to section 452 of the California Evidence Code, and shall take official notice of any matter specified in said section 452 if the provisions of section 453 of the California Evidence Code are complied with by a party.

Rule 27. Order Of Business For Hearings

Unless the hearing officer rules that it is unnecessary, all hearings shall proceed as follows:

(a) The hearing officer shall call the case and ask for appearances by or for all parties, which shall be recorded. After all of the appearances are made, the parties may make opening statements, orally or in writing, except the respondent may delay its opening statement until after APPLICANT'S presentation of evidence.

(b) If the parties are ready to proceed, the hearing officer will describe the documentary file before the hearing and ensure that all parties have identical document sets.

(c) APPLICANT'S full presentation, including any witness testimony, is given. During this presentation, the hearing officer and the Board's counsel have the right to ask questions.

(d) Board's full presentation, including any witness testimony, is given. During this presentation, the hearing officer and the APPLICANT have the right to ask questions.

(e) Rebuttal evidence may then be presented in the same order.

(f) APPLICANT'S summary and closing statements are made followed by Board's summary and closing statements. Upon the request of either party, the summary and closing

statements may be made in writing and submitted by all parties to the hearing officer, no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after the close of the hearing or as otherwise agreed to by the parties and the hearing officer.

Rule 28. Service Of Proposed Findings Of Fact And Recommended Decision

At the conclusion of the hearing, proposed findings of fact and recommendations of the hearing officer shall be sent to the Board by the hearing officer who presided at the hearing, no later than sixty (60) calendar days after the submission of the summary and closing statements. The Board will serve the findings and recommendations on the parties.

Rule 29. Objections To Proposed Findings Of Fact And Recommended Decision

Any party objecting to the proposed findings of fact and recommended decision has ten (10) calendar days from the date of mailing of the proposed finding of fact and recommended decision to submit written objections to the hearing officer and the other party. Within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of mailing the objections to the hearing officer, or the time for filing objections expires, whichever is earlier, the hearing officer shall:

- (a) Adopt the proposed findings and recommended decision originally submitted, or
- (b) Make such changes in the proposed findings and recommended decision as the hearing officer deems appropriate in light of the evidence, the objections submitted by the unsuccessful party, and any response, or
- (c) Serve notice of the final proposed findings and recommended decision of the Board, together with a summary of the evidence, the pleadings of the parties, and their attachments.

Rule 30. Action By The Board

- (a) The Hearing Officer's Proposed Findings of Fact and Recommended Decision on

an application for disability retirement benefits will be placed on the Board's Closed Session Agenda for determination.

(b) Upon receipt of the Proposed Findings of Fact and Recommended Decision, the Board may:

(1) Approve and adopt the proposed findings and the recommendations of the hearing officer, or

(2) Require a transcript or summary of all the testimony, plus all other evidence received by the hearing officer. Upon the receipt thereof, the Board shall take such action as in its opinion is indicated by such evidence, or

(3) Refer the matter back with or without instructions to the hearing officer for further proceedings.

(4) Set the matter for hearing before itself. At such hearing the Board shall hear and decide the matter as if it had not been referred to the hearing officer.

Rule 31. Board's Decision After Review Of the Record

In any case where the Board makes a decision based upon a transcript or summary of all the testimony, plus all other evidence received by the hearing officer, the Board may approve and adopt proposed findings and recommended decision or, the Board shall direct the prevailing party to prepare proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law consistent with its tentative decision. The proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law shall be served on the unsuccessful party who shall have ten (10) calendar days from the date of mailing of the proposed findings to serve and file written objections thereto. Thereafter, the Board shall consider such written objections, if any, and shall adopt such findings of fact and conclusions of law as it deems appropriate.

Rule 32. Alteration Of Time Requirements

Nothing in these procedures is to be construed as preventing the parties from stipulating to lesser intervals than those prescribed above. The hearing officer may for good cause shown, after giving both parties an opportunity to be heard, shorten or lengthen the times specified above, except that the hearing officer may not lengthen the one hundred eighty (180) days to close the record, the sixty (60) days to submit a recommended decision, or the thirty (30) days for reconsideration.

Rule 33. Dismissal For Lack Of Prosecution

If, as a result of the APPLICANT'S failure to comply with the procedures specified above, the matter is not heard within two (2) years after a request for hearing is granted by the Board, the case may be dismissed with prejudice, except that where these procedural rules have been served on APPLICANT or APPLICANT'S counsel, and APPLICANT continues to fail to follow the rules, the case shall be dismissed in accordance with Rule 16, above.

Rule 34. Service Of Documents

Unless otherwise provided, service of documents provided for in these rules may be made by mail or by personal service. The time requirements of California Code of Civil Procedure section 1013 shall govern all service by mail.

Rule 35. Judicial Review

Judicial review of final retirement decisions shall be subject to Code of Civil Procedure section 1094.6. Following each final decision, the Retirement Administrator shall send to the APPLICANT and the APPLICANT'S attorney written notice as follows:

A judicial review of this decision is governed by the provisions of section 1094.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure of the State of California. You are advised that any such petition must be filed not later than the ninetieth (90th) day following the date a decision becomes final.

Rule 36. **Access to Board Records**

(a) Prior to the Board's administrative action in Rule 10, the APPLICANT is given, at no cost to the APPLICANT, a copy of all the material, including administrative reports and medical records, which is presented by the Retirement Administrator to the Board for its consideration of the application.

(b) Pursuant to Rule 12, the APPLICANT is given, at no cost to the APPLICANT, a copy of all the Board's exhibits which are presented to the hearing officer.

(c) Prior to the Board's final decision on the application under Rule 30, or Rule 31, the APPLICANT is given, at no cost to the APPLICANT, a copy of all documents which are presented by the Retirement Administrator to the Board for its final consideration of the application.

(d) Due to the sensitive nature of psychiatric or psychological records, these records will only be given to APPLICANT'S attorney. If APPLICANT is in pro per, that is not represented by counsel, the Retirement Administrator will send copies of the APPLICANT'S psychiatric or psychological records to APPLICANT'S treating physician.

(e) In addition to (a)-(c) above, the APPLICANT may, in writing, at any time request a copy of all the material in his or her retirement file at the Board of Retirement. The APPLICANT will be charged for copying the file. All copying charges must be paid before the records are released. In the alternative, APPLICANT may hire a copy service to make copies of part or all of his or her file.