**Section 2402.160 Prehearing Conferences**

a) Upon written notice by the Hearing Officer in any proceeding, or upon written request by any party, the Hearing Officer may direct parties or their Attorneys to appear at a specified time and place for a conference, prior to or during the course of hearing, for the purpose of formulating issues and considering:

1) the simplification of issues;

2) The necessity or desirability of amending the pleadings for the purpose of clarification, amplification or limitation;

3) The possibility of making admissions of certain averments of facts or stipulations concerning the use by either or both parties of matters of public record to avoid unnecessary introduction of proof;

4) the limitation of the number of witnesses;

5) the propriety of prior mutual exchange between or among the parties of prepared testimony and exhibits; and

6) such other matters as may aid in the simplification of the evidence and disposition of the proceeding.

b) Opportunity shall be afforded all parties to be represented by legal counsel and to dispose of the case by stipulation, agreed settlement or consent order, unless otherwise precluded by law. Any stipulation, agreed settlement, or consent order reached before a final determination by the Department shall be submitted in writing to the Hearing Officer and shall become effective only if approved by the Hearing Officer or the Director.

c) Only if all parties to a controversy agree, a record of the pre-hearing conference shall be kept. It must be certified to by the parties, then filed with the case material in the Department files.