

RCW 64.35.605 Disputed claim—Notice—Mediation procedures—

Duties of parties. (1) If a dispute between a qualified insurer and a claimant arising under a qualified warranty cannot be resolved by informal negotiation within a reasonable time, the claimant or qualified insurer may require that the dispute be referred to mediation by delivering written notice to the other to mediate.

(2) If a party delivers a request to mediate under subsection (1) of this section, the qualified insurer and the party must attend a mediation session in relation to the dispute and may invite to participate in the mediation any other party to the dispute who may be liable.

(3) Within twenty-one days after the party has delivered a request to mediate under subsection (1) of this section, the parties must, directly or with the assistance of an independent, neutral person or organization, jointly appoint a mutually acceptable mediator.

(4) If the parties do not jointly appoint a mutually acceptable mediator within the time required by subsection (3) of this section, the party may apply to the superior court of the county where the project is located, which must appoint a mediator taking into account:

- (a) The need for the mediator to be neutral and independent;
- (b) The qualifications of the mediator;
- (c) The mediator's fees;
- (d) The mediator's availability; and

(e) Any other consideration likely to result in the selection of an impartial, competent, and effective mediator.

(5) After selecting the mediator under subsection (4) of this section, the superior court must promptly notify the parties in writing of that selection.

(6) The mediator selected by the superior court is deemed to be appointed by the parties effective the date of the notice sent under subsection (5) of this section.

(7) The first mediation session must occur within twenty-one days of the appointment of the mediator at the date, time, and place selected by the mediator.

(8) A party may attend a mediation session by representative if:

(a) The party is under a legal disability and the representative is that party's guardian ad litem;

(b) The party is not an individual; or

(c) The party is a resident of a jurisdiction other than Washington and will not be in Washington at the time of the mediation session.

(9) A representative who attends a mediation session in the place of a party as permitted by subsection (8) of this section:

(a) Must be familiar with all relevant facts on which the party, on whose behalf the representative attends, intends to rely; and

(b) Must have full authority to settle, or have immediate access to a person who has full authority to settle, on behalf of the party on whose behalf the representative attends.

(10) A party or a representative who attends the mediation session may be accompanied by counsel.

(11) Any other person may attend a mediation session on consent of all parties or their representatives.

(12) At least seven days before the first mediation session is to be held, each party must deliver to the mediator a statement briefly setting out:

(a) The facts on which the party intends to rely; and

(b) The matters in dispute.

(13) The mediator must promptly send each party's statement to each of the other parties.

(14) Before the first mediation session, the parties must enter into a retainer agreement with the mediator which must:

(a) Disclose the cost of the mediation services; and

(b) Provide that the cost of the mediation will be paid:

(i) Equally by the parties; or

(ii) On any other specified basis agreed by the parties.

(15) The mediator may conduct the mediation in any manner he or she considers appropriate to assist the parties to reach a resolution that is timely, fair, and cost-effective.

(16) A person may not disclose, or be compelled to disclose, in any proceeding, oral or written information acquired or an opinion formed, including, without limitation, any offer or admission made in anticipation of or during a mediation session.

(17) Nothing in subsection (16) of this section precludes a party from introducing into evidence in a proceeding any information or records produced in the course of the mediation that are otherwise producible or compellable in those proceedings.

(18) A mediation session is concluded when:

(a) All issues are resolved;

(b) The mediator determines that the process will not be productive and so advises the parties or their representatives; or

(c) The mediation session is completed and there is no agreement to continue.

(19) If the mediation resolves some but not all issues, the mediator may, at the request of all parties, complete a report setting out any agreements made as a result of the mediation, including, without limitation, any agreements made by the parties on any of the following:

(a) Facts;

(b) Issues; and

(c) Future procedural steps. [2004 c 201 s 1501.]