

Dept. of Health and Human Services

§ 96.53

the same statutory provisions. This circumstance is consistent with the intent of and statutory authority for the block grant programs. In resolving any issue raised by a complaint or a Federal audit the Department will defer to a State's interpretation of its assurances and of the provisions of the block grant statutes unless the interpretation is clearly erroneous. In any event, the Department will provide copies of complaints to the independent entity responsible for auditing the State's activities under the block grant program involved. Any determination by the Department that a State's interpretation is not clearly erroneous shall not preclude or otherwise prejudice the State auditors' consideration of the question.

[47 FR 29486, July 6, 1982; 47 FR 43062, Sept. 30, 1982, as amended at 52 FR 37967, Oct. 13, 1987; 57 FR 1977, Jan. 16, 1992; 60 FR 21358, May 1, 1995]

§ 96.51 Hearings.

(a) The Department will order a State to repay amounts found not to have been expended in accordance with law of the certifications provided by the State only after the Department has provided the State notice of the order and an opportunity for a hearing. Opportunity for a hearing will not be provided, however, when the State, in resolving audit findings or at another time, has agreed that the amounts were not expended in accordance with law or the certifications. The hearing will be governed by subpart F of this part and will be held in the State if required by statute.

(b) If a State refuses to repay amounts after a final decision that is not subject to further review in the Department, the amounts may be offset against payments to the State. If a statute requires an opportunity for a hearing before such an offset may be made, the hearing will be governed by subpart F of this part and will be held in the State if required by statute.

(c) The Department will withhold funds from a State only if the Department has provided the State an opportunity for a hearing. The hearing will be governed by subpart F of this part

and will be held in the State if required by statute.

[47 FR 29486, July 6, 1982, as amended at 52 FR 37967, Oct. 13, 1987]

§ 96.52 Appeals.

(a) Decisions resulting from repayment hearings held pursuant to § 96.51(a) of this part may be appealed by either the State or the Department to the Grant Appeals Board.

(b) Decisions resulting from offset hearings held pursuant to § 96.51(b) of this part may not be appealed.

(c) Decisions resulting from withholding hearings held pursuant to § 96.51(c) of this part may be appealed to the Secretary by the State or the Department as follows:

(1) An application for appeal must be received by the Secretary no later than 60 days after the appealing party receives a copy of the presiding officer's decision. The application shall clearly identify the questions for which review is sought and shall explain fully the party's position with respect to those questions. A copy shall be furnished to the other party.

(2) The Secretary may permit the filing of opposing briefs, hold informal conferences, or take whatever other steps the Secretary finds appropriate to decide the appeal.

(3) The Secretary may refer an application for appeal to the Grant Appeals Board. Notwithstanding part 16 of this title, in the event of such a referral, the Board shall issue a recommended decision that will not become final until affirmed, reversed, or modified by the Secretary.

(d) Any appeal to the Grant Appeals Board under this section shall be governed by part 16 of this title except that the Board shall not hold a hearing. The Board shall accept any findings with respect to credibility of witnesses made by the presiding officer. The Board may otherwise review and supplement the record as provided for in part 16 of this title and decide the issues raised.

§ 96.53 Length of withholding.

Under the low-income home energy assistance program and community services block grant, the Department