



ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY STATEMENT

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is committed to using alternative methods for resolving disputes in all of its activities, where appropriate and feasible. The Administrative Dispute Resolution Act of 1996 authorizes and encourages agencies to use alternative dispute resolution as a preferred option to traditional forms of dispute resolution. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) encompasses a variety of problem-solving processes designed to assist employees resolve their disputes collaboratively and in a more timely manner, and can be used to resolve a wide range of workplace disputes, including Equal Employment Opportunity complaints, grievances, workplace employee conflicts, and team conflicts. ADR techniques utilized by the Agency include: mediation (which is the most frequently used), facilitation, coaching, conciliation, and training. These techniques work to resolve existing disputes and provide employees with tools for managing workplace conflict.

I am dedicated to providing employees with a work environment that enables them to ensure that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. To this end, employees must have access to effective and efficient methods for resolving workplace disputes. This notice affirms my commitment to the use of ADR in the resolution of workplace disputes.

As workplace conflicts may detract from our ability to successfully complete our food safety mission, all executives, managers, and supervisors are expected to take appropriate action as early as possible, in an effort to resolve or prevent workplace conflicts. Executives, managers, and supervisors are expected to advocate the use of ADR, whenever appropriate, as the initial mechanism used for conflict resolution and prevention. Additionally, when an employee requests ADR, executives, managers, and supervisors are required to participate in good faith.

Used properly in appropriate circumstances, ADR can provide faster, less expensive, less contentious, and more productive results in eliminating workplace disputes. ADR also helps to preserve and strengthen working relationships through the understanding and clarity gained during open and honest dialogue. Involved parties are generally more satisfied with their mutually agreed upon resolution than one imposed by a third-party decision-maker.

I encourage you to utilize the Agency's ADR Program to resolve and prevent conflict, thereby allowing us to focus on our food safety mission.

If you have a question or need assistance, please contact the Civil Rights Staff at 1 (800) 269-6912 or by email at MCRG@fsis.usda.gov. You can find additional information about the FSIS EEO and Civil Rights Program at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/aboutfsis/civil-rights>.

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Administrator