

RCW 11.96A.310 Arbitration procedure. (1) When arbitration available. Arbitration under RCW 11.96A.260 through 11.96A.320 is available only if:

(a) A party has first petitioned for mediation under RCW 11.96A.300 and such mediation has been concluded;

(b) The court has determined that mediation under RCW 11.96A.300 is not required and has not ordered that the matter be disposed of in some other manner;

(c) All of the parties or the parties' virtual representatives have agreed not to use the mediation procedures of RCW 11.96A.300; or

(d) The court has ordered that the matter must be submitted to arbitration.

(2) Commencement of arbitration. Arbitration must be commenced as follows:

(a) If the matter is not settled through mediation under RCW 11.96A.300, or the court orders that mediation is not required, a party may commence arbitration by serving written notice of arbitration on all other parties or the parties' virtual representatives. The notice must be served no later than twenty days after the later of the conclusion of the mediation procedure, if any, or twenty days after entry of the order providing that mediation is not required. If arbitration is ordered by the court under RCW 11.96A.300(3), arbitration must proceed in accordance with the order.

(b) If the parties or the parties' virtual representatives agree that mediation does not apply and have not agreed to another procedure for resolving the matter, a party may commence arbitration without leave of the court by serving written notice of arbitration on all other parties or the parties' virtual representatives at any time before or at the initial judicial hearing on the matter. After the initial judicial hearing on the matter, the written notice required in subsection (1) of this section may only be served with leave of the court.

Any notice required by this section must be in substantially the following form:

NOTICE OF ARBITRATION UNDER RCW 11.96A.310

To: (Parties)

Notice is hereby given that the following matter must be resolved by arbitration under RCW 11.96A.310:

(State nature of matter)

The matter must be resolved using the arbitration procedures of RCW 11.96A.310 unless a petition objecting to arbitration is filed with the superior court within twenty days of receipt of this notice. If a petition objecting to arbitration is not filed within the twenty-day period, RCW 11.96A.310 requires you to furnish to all other parties or the parties' virtual representatives a list of acceptable arbitrators within thirty days of your receipt of this notice.

(Optional: Our list of acceptable arbitrators is as follows:)

DATED:

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(Party or party's legal representative)

(3) Objection to arbitration. A party may object to arbitration by filing a petition with the superior court and serving the petition

on all parties or the parties' virtual representatives. The objection to arbitration may be filed at any time unless a written notice of arbitration has been served, in which case the objection to arbitration must be filed and served no later than twenty days after receipt of the written notice of arbitration. The hearing on the objection to arbitration must be heard no later than twenty days after the filing of that petition. The party objecting to arbitration must give notice of the hearing to all parties at least ten days before the hearing and shall include a copy of the petition. At the hearing, the court shall order that arbitration proceed except for good cause shown. Such order shall not be subject to appeal or revision. If the court determines that the matter should not be subject to arbitration, the court shall dispose of the matter by: (a) Deciding the matter at that hearing, but only if the petition objecting to arbitration contains a request for such relief; or (b) directing other judicial proceedings.

(4) Selection of arbitrator; qualifications of arbitrator.

(a) If a petition objecting to arbitration is not filed as provided in subsection (3) of this section, or if a court determines that arbitration must apply, each party shall, within thirty days of receipt of the initial notice or within twenty days after the court determination, whichever is later, furnish all other parties or the parties' virtual representatives a list of acceptable arbitrators. If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator within ten days after the list is required to be furnished, a party may petition the court to appoint an arbitrator. All parties may submit a list of qualified and acceptable arbitrators to the court no later than the date on which the hearing on the petition is to be held. At the hearing the court shall select a qualified arbitrator from lists of acceptable arbitrators provided by the parties.

(b) A qualified arbitrator must be an attorney licensed to practice before the courts of this state having at least five years of experience in trust or estate matters or five years of experience in litigation or other formal dispute resolution involving trusts or estates, or an individual, who may be an attorney, with special skill or training with respect to the matter. The arbitrator may be the same person selected and used as a mediator under the mediation procedures of RCW 11.96A.300.

(5) Arbitration rules. Arbitration must be under *chapter 7.06 RCW, mandatory arbitration of civil actions, as follows:

(a) Chapter 7.06 RCW, the superior court mandatory arbitration rules adopted by the supreme court, and any local rules for mandatory arbitration adopted by the superior court apply to this title. If the superior court has not adopted chapter 7.06 RCW, then the local rules for mandatory arbitration applicable in King county apply, except all the duties of the director of arbitration must be performed by the presiding judge of the superior court.

(b) If a party has already filed a petition with the court with respect to the matter that will be the subject of the arbitration proceedings, then all other parties to the arbitration proceedings who have not yet filed a reply thereto must file a reply with the arbitrator within ten days of the date on which the arbitrator is selected or appointed.

(c) The arbitration provisions of this subsection apply to all matters in dispute. The dollar limits and restrictions to monetary damages of RCW 7.06.020 do not apply to arbitrations under this subsection. To the extent any provision in this title is inconsistent

with chapter 7.06 RCW or the rules referenced in (a) of this subsection, the provisions of this title control.

(d) The compensation of the arbitrator must be set by written agreement between the parties and the arbitrator. The arbitrator must be compensated at the arbitrator's stated rate of compensation for acting as an arbitrator of disputes in trusts, estates, and nonprobate matters unless the parties or the parties' virtual representatives agree otherwise.

(e) Unless directed otherwise by the arbitrator in accord with subsection (6) of this section or RCW 11.96A.320, or unless the matter is not resolved by arbitration and the court finally resolving the matter directs otherwise:

(i) Costs of the arbitration, including compensation for the arbitrator's services, must be borne equally by the parties participating in the arbitration, with the details of those costs and fees to be set forth in an arbitration agreement between the arbitrator and all parties to the matter; and

(ii) A party shall bear its own costs and expenses, including legal fees and witness expenses, in connection with the arbitration proceeding.

(f) The arbitrator and the parties shall execute a written agreement setting forth the terms of the arbitration and the process to be followed. This agreement must also contain the fee agreement provided in (d) of this subsection. A dispute as to this agreement must be resolved by the director of arbitration.

(g) The rules of evidence and discovery applicable to civil causes of action before the superior court as defined in RCW 11.96A.290 apply, unless the parties have agreed otherwise or the arbitrator rules otherwise.

(6) Costs of arbitration. The arbitrator may order costs, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expert witness fees, to be paid by any party to the proceedings as justice may require.

(7) Decision of arbitrator. The arbitrator shall issue a final decision in writing within thirty days of the conclusion of the final arbitration hearing. Promptly after the issuance of the decision, the arbitrator shall serve each of the parties to the proceedings with a copy of the written arbitration decision. Proof of service shall be filed with the court. Service shall be made in conformity with CR 5(b) of the rules for superior court.

(8) Arbitration decision may be filed with the court. The arbitrator or any party to the arbitration may file the arbitrator's decision with the clerk of the superior court at any time after its issuance. Notice of such filing shall be promptly given to each party to the arbitration proceedings.

(9) Appeal. (a) The final decision of the arbitrator may be appealed by filing a notice of appeal with the superior court requesting a trial de novo on all issues of law and fact. The notice of appeal must be filed within thirty days after the date on which the decision was served on the party filing the notice of appeal. A trial de novo shall then be held, including a right to jury, if demanded.

(b) If an appeal is not filed within the time provided in (a) of this subsection, the arbitration decision is conclusive and binding on all parties. If the arbitrator's decision has been filed with the clerk of the superior court, a judgment shall be entered and may be presented to the court by any party on ten days' prior notice. The judgment when entered shall have the same force and effect as judgments in civil actions.

(10) Costs on appeal of arbitration decision. The prevailing party in any such de novo superior court decision after an arbitration result must be awarded costs, including expert witness fees and attorneys' fees, in connection with the judicial resolution of the matter. Such costs shall be charged against the nonprevailing parties in such amount and in such manner as the court determines to be equitable. The provisions of this subsection take precedence over the provisions of RCW 11.96A.150 or any other similar provision. [2001 c 14 § 5; 1999 c 42 § 506.]

***Reviser's note:** Chapter 7.06 RCW was renamed "arbitration of civil actions" June 2018.