

Settlement Conferences

The Court encourages parties and counsel to consider voluntary settlement conferences when and where appropriate. The Court is willing to serve as a facilitator upon the parties' request and/or an order of reference. Based on the nature of the case and the state of settlement negotiations, the Court will be prepared to devote the entire day for the conference.

FIRST: Seven days before the settlement conference, each party shall submit by hand, fax or email efile_stafford@mied.uscourts.gov a confidential, ex-parte settlement statement directly to the chambers of the Honorable Elizabeth A. Stafford, United States Magistrate Judge. DO NOT FILE THESE STATEMENTS WITH THE COURT. The statements shall be limited to ten pages with exhibits that total no more than ten pages, and shall include the following **clearly marked sections**:

- A brief description of the background and nature of the case;
- The party's perceived strengths;
- The party's perceived weaknesses;
- A statement identifying each cause of action at issue, and the remedies available under each of those causes of action;
- A summary of all settlement discussions that have taken place to date, including the **specific amount** of any offers and counter-offers that have been made;
- The **specific amount** of the party's opening settlement offer for the purpose of the conference.

SECOND: Attorneys **must prepare** their clients for the settlement conference as directed on the [attached Attorney Settlement Conference Preparation](#). At the settlement conference, the parties and their attorneys are expected to conduct themselves in a business-like manner and to negotiate in good faith.

THIRD: Individuals with full settlement authority shall be personally present at settlement conferences. For the plaintiff(s), "full settlement authority" means the authority to dismiss the complaint with prejudice in exchange for a settlement. For the defendant(s), "full settlement authority" is defined as the full relief requested in the lawsuit and/or the relief requested by the last settlement demand. If an insurance company agent holds the full settlement authority, such agent must be present at the conference. **If a party appears at the conference with authority to settle for only less than full settlement authority, the conference will be rescheduled.**