

SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE, A PARTY MAY OBJECT IN WRITING TO THE SELECTION, STATING THE REASONS FOR THE OBJECTION.

(II) IF THE COURT SUSTAINS THE OBJECTION, THE COURT SHALL APPOINT A DIFFERENT MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL TO CONDUCT A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE.

(3) A MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCTING A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE SHALL FOLLOW THE "MARYLAND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR MEDIATORS, ARBITRATORS, AND OTHER ADR PRACTITIONERS" ADOPTED BY THE COURT OF APPEALS.

(G) THE MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCTING A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE SHALL SCHEDULE AN INITIAL CONFERENCE WITH THE PARTIES AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE.

(H) (1) AT LEAST 15 DAYS BEFORE THE INITIAL CONFERENCE, THE PARTIES SHALL SEND TO THE MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCTING A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE A BRIEF WRITTEN OUTLINE OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PARTY'S CASE.

(2) A PARTY MAY NOT BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE TO ANOTHER PARTY THE WRITTEN OUTLINE DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

(I) (1) ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION UNDER THIS SECTION MAY NOT OPERATE TO DELAY DISCOVERY IN THE ACTION.

(2) IF THE MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCTING A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE FINDS THAT THE PARTIES NEED TO ENGAGE IN DISCOVERY FOR A LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION, THE MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCTING A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE MAY MEDIATE THE SCOPE AND SCHEDULE OF DISCOVERY NEEDED TO PROCEED WITH THE ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION, ADJOURN THE INITIAL CONFERENCE, AND RESCHEDULE AN ADDITIONAL CONFERENCE FOR A LATER DATE.

(J) A NEUTRAL EXPERT MAY BE EMPLOYED IN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION UNDER THIS SECTION AS PROVIDED IN TITLE 17 OF THE MARYLAND RULES.

(K) IN ACCORDANCE WITH MARYLAND RULE 17-109, THE OUTLINE DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (H) OF THIS SECTION AND ANY WRITTEN OR ORAL COMMUNICATION MADE IN THE COURSE OF A CONFERENCE UNDER THIS SECTION:

- (1) ARE CONFIDENTIAL;
- (2) DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ADMISSION; AND
- (3) ARE NOT DISCOVERABLE.

(L) UNLESS EXCUSED BY THE MEDIATOR, NEUTRAL PROVIDER, OR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCTING A SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE, THE PARTIES AND THE