**§ 90-21.64. Time limitations for arbitration.**

(a) Time Frames. – The time frames provided in this section shall run from the date of the filing of the stipulation where the parties agreed to submit the dispute to arbitration under the Article. Any arbitration under this Article shall be conducted according to the time frames as follows:

(1) Within 45 days, the claimant shall provide a copy to the defendants of all relevant medical records. Alternatively, the claimant may provide to the defendants a release, in compliance with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, for all relevant medical records, along with the names and addresses of all health care providers who may have possession, custody, or control of the relevant medical records. The provisions of this subdivision shall not limit discovery conducted pursuant to G.S. 90-21.63(c).

(2) Within 120 days, the claimant shall disclose to each defendant the name and curriculum vitae or other documentation of qualifications of any expert the claimant expects to call as a witness.

(3) Within 140 days, each defendant shall disclose to the claimant the name and curriculum vitae or other documentation of qualifications of any expert the defendant expects to call as a witness.

(4) Within 160 days, each party shall disclose to each other party the name and curriculum vitae or other documentation of qualifications of any rebuttal expert the party expects to call as a witness.

(5) Within 240 days, all discovery shall be completed.

(6) Within 270 days, the arbitration hearing shall commence.

(b) Scheduling Order. – The arbitrator shall issue a case scheduling order in every proceeding specifying the dates by which the requirements of subdivisions (2) through (6) of subsection (a) of this section shall be completed. The scheduling order also shall specify a deadline for the service of dispositive motions and briefs.

(c) Public Policy as to When Hearings Begin. – It is the express public policy of the General Assembly that arbitration hearings under this Article be commenced no later than 10 months after the parties file the stipulation where the parties agreed to submit the dispute to arbitration under this Article. The arbitrator may grant a continuance of the commencement of the arbitration hearing only where a party shows that exceptional circumstances create an undue and unavoidable hardship on the party or where all parties consent to the continuance. (2007-541, s. 1.)