

## Department of Veterans Affairs

## §1.911

delinquent if the debtor fails to satisfy obligations under a repayment agreement with VA.

(c) As used in §§1.900 through 1.954, *referral for litigation* means referral to the Department of Justice for appropriate legal actions, except in those specified instances where a case is referred to VA Regional Counsel for legal action.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3701, 3711)

[52 FR 42105, Nov. 3, 1987]

### STANDARDS FOR COLLECTION OF CLAIMS

AUTHORITY: Sections 1.910 to 1.921 issued under 72 Stat. 1114; 38 U.S.C. 501.

SOURCE: 32 FR 2613, Feb. 8, 1967, unless otherwise noted.

#### §1.910 Aggressive collection action.

The Department of Veterans Affairs will take aggressive action, on a timely basis with effective followup, to collect all claims for money or property arising from its activities.

#### §1.911 Collection of debts owed by reason of participation in a benefits program.

(a) *Scope.* This section applies to the collection of debts resulting from an individual's participation in a benefits program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It does not apply to the Department's other claims collection activities. (Note: School liability debts are governed by §21.4009; financial institution debts are subject to chapter II, parts 209, 210, and 240 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations; and other debts are governed by part 102 of title 4 of the Code of Federal Regulations.)

(b) *Written demands.* When the Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that a debt exists by reason of an administrative decision or by operation of law, the Department of Veterans Affairs shall promptly demand, in writing, payment of the debt. The Department of Veterans Affairs shall notify the debtor of his or her rights and remedies in connection with the debt and the consequences of failure to cooperate with collection efforts. Ordinarily, no more than three demand letters, at intervals of not more than thirty days, will be sent, but letters subse-

quent to the initial letter will not be necessary if:

(1) The Secretary determines that further demand would be futile;

(2) The debtor has indicated in writing that he or she does not intend to pay the debt;

(3) Judicial action to protect the Government's interest is indicated under the circumstances; or

(4) Collection by offset pursuant to §1.912a can be made.

(c) *Rights and remedies.* Subject to limitations referred to in this paragraph, the debtor has the right to informally dispute the existence or amount of the debt, to request waiver of collection of the debt, to a hearing on the waiver request, and to appeal the Department of Veterans Affairs decision underlying the debt. These rights can be exercised separately or simultaneously. Except as provided in §1.912a (collection by offset), the exercise of any of these rights will not stay any collection proceeding.

(1) *Informal dispute.* This means that the debtor writes to the Department of Veterans Affairs and questions whether he or she owes the debt or whether the amount is accurate. The Department of Veterans Affairs will, as expeditiously as possible, review the accuracy of the debt determination. If the resolution is adverse to the debtor, he or she may also request waiver of collection as indicated in paragraphs (c)(2) and (3) of this section.

(2) *Request for waiver; hearing on request.* The debtor has the right to request waiver of collection, in accordance with §1.963 or §1.964, and the right to a hearing on the request. Requests for waivers must be filed in writing. A waiver request must be filed within the time limit set forth in 38 U.S.C. 5302. If waiver is granted, in whole or in part, the debtor has a right to refund of amounts already collected up to the amount waived.

(3) *Appeal.* The debtor may appeal, in accordance with part 19 of this title, the decision underlying the debt.

(d) *Notification.* The Department of Veterans Affairs shall notify the debtor in writing of the following:

(1) The exact amount of the debt;

(2) The specific reasons for the debt, in simple and concise language;

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(3) The rights and remedies described in paragraph (c) of this section, including a brief explanation of the concept of, and requirements for, waiver;

(4) That collection may be made by offset from current or future Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, subject to § 1.912a; and

(5) That interest and administrative costs may be assessed, in accordance with § 1.919, as appropriate.

(e) *Sufficiency of notification.* Notification is sufficient when sent by ordinary mail directed to the debtor's last known address and not returned as undeliverable by postal authorities.

(f) *Further explanation.* Further explanation may be found for—

(1) Appellate rights, in part 19 of this title;

(2) Notification of any decision affecting the payment of benefits or granting relief, in § 3.103(e);

(3) Right to appeal a waiver decision, in § 1.958;

(4) Refund to a successful waiver applicant of money already collected, in § 1.967; and

(5) The assessment of interest and administrative costs, in § 1.919.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5302, 5314)

[48 FR 1055, Jan. 10, 1983; 48 FR 6336, Feb. 11, 1983. Redesignated and amended at 52 FR 42105, Nov. 3, 1987; 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

### § 1.912 Collection by offset.

(a) *Authority and scope.* In accordance with part 102 of title 4 of the Code of Federal Regulations, VA shall collect debts by administrative offset from any payments made by VA to an individual indebted to VA. This section does not pertain to offset from either current salary or from benefit payments, but does apply to offset from all other VA payments, including an employee's final salary check and lump-sum leave payment. Procedures for offset from benefit payments and current salary are found in § 1.912a and §§ 1.980 through 1.994. NOTE: VA cannot offset or refer for the purpose of offset, either under the authority of this section or under any other authority found in §§ 1.900 through 1.954 and §§ 1.980 through 1.984, any debt described in 38 U.S.C. 3726 unless the requirements set forth in that section have been met.

(b) *Notification.* Prior to initiation of administrative offset, if not provided in the initial notice of indebtedness, VA is required to provide the debtor with written notice of:

(1) The nature and amount of the debt;

(2) VA's intention to pursue collection by offset procedures from the specified VA payment, the date of commencement of offset, and the exact amount to be offset;

(3) The opportunity to inspect and copy VA records pertaining to the debt;

(4) The right to contest either the existence or amount of the debt or the proposed offset schedule, or if applicable, to request a waiver of collection of the debt, or to request a hearing on any of these matters;

(5) That commencement of offset will begin, unless the debtor makes a written request for the administrative relief discussed in paragraph (b)(4) of this section within 30 days of the date of this notice; and

(6) The opportunity to enter into a written agreement with VA to repay the debt in lieu of offset.

(c) *Deferral of offset.* (1) If the debtor, within 30 days of the date of the notification required by paragraph (b) of this section, disputes in writing the existence or amount of the debt or the amount of the scheduled offset, offset shall not commence until the dispute is reviewed and a decision is rendered by VA adverse to the debtor.

(2) If the debtor, within 30 days of the date of the required notification by VA, requests in writing the waiver of collection of the debt in accordance with § 1.963 or § 1.964, offset shall not commence until VA has made an initial decision to deny the waiver request.

(3) If the debtor, within 30 days of the required notification by VA, requests in writing a hearing on the issues found in paragraphs (c)(1) and (2) of this section, offset shall not commence until a decision is rendered by VA on the issue which is the basis of the hearing.

(d) *Exceptions.* (1) Offset may commence prior to either resolution of a dispute or decision on a waiver request as discussed in paragraph (c) of this section, if collection of the debt would