



VA ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR VA-ACCREDITED ATTORNEYS, CLAIMS AGENTS, AND VSO REPRESENTATIVES

The standards of conduct in 38 C.F.R. § 14.632 establish the appropriate behavior for VA-accredited attorneys, agents, and representatives.

VA-accredited individuals providing VA claims assistance *shall*:

- Faithfully execute their duties on behalf of a VA claimant;
- Be truthful in their dealings with claimants and VA;
- Provide claimants with competent representation before VA; and
- Act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing claimants.

See 38 C.F.R. §§ 14.632 (a) & (b).

VA-accredited individuals *shall not*:

- (1) Violate the standards of conduct as described in 38 C.F.R. § 14.632.
- (2) Circumvent the rules of conduct through the actions of another.
- (3) Engage in conduct involving fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or dishonesty.
- (4) Violate one or more of the provisions of title 38, United States Code, or title 38, Code of Federal Regulations.
- (5) Enter into an agreement for, charge, solicit, or receive a fee that is clearly unreasonable or otherwise prohibited by law or regulation.
- (6) Solicit, receive, or enter into agreements for gifts related to representation provided before an agency of original jurisdiction has issued a decision on a claim or claims and a Notice of Disagreement has been filed with respect to that decision.
- (7) Delay, without good cause, the processing of a claim at any stage of the administrative process.
- (8) Mislead, threaten, coerce, or deceive a claimant regarding benefits or other rights under programs administered by VA.
- (9) Engage in, or counsel or advise a claimant to engage in, acts or behavior prejudicial to the fair and orderly conduct of administrative proceedings before VA.
- (10) Disclose, without the claimant's authorization, any information provided by VA for purposes of representation.
- (11) Engage in any other unlawful or unethical conduct.

*In addition, in providing representation to a claimant before VA, VA-accredited attorneys shall not engage in behavior or activities prohibited by the rules of professional conduct of any jurisdiction in which they are licensed to practice law.

See 38 C.F.R. § 14.632(c) & (d).

If I violate a standard of conduct or engage in any other unlawful or unethical conduct, what will happen? If VA determines that you have violated the standards of conduct, VA may suspend or cancel your accreditation. VA is authorized to report the suspension or cancellation to any bar association, court, or agency to which you are admitted. In addition, VA may collaborate with State and Federal enforcement authorities if it is suspected that your actions may have implications under State or other Federal laws.

For More Information: Visit the VA Office of the General Counsel website at: <http://www.va.gov/ogc/accreditation.asp>