

## Department of Veterans Affairs

## § 1.500

cell anemia treatment program as an employee or patient may be applied for by any law enforcement or prosecutorial agency which has reason to believe that employees or agents of the VA treatment program are engaged in criminal misconduct.

(b) *Notice.* The VA facility director must be given adequate notice of the application and an opportunity to appear and be heard (for the limited purpose of providing evidence on the statutory and regulatory criteria for the issuance of the court order), unless the application asserts a belief that:

(1) The VA facility director is involved in the criminal activities to be investigated by the undercover agent or informant; or

(2) The VA facility director will intentionally or unintentionally disclose the proposed placement of an undercover agent or informant to the employees or agents who are suspected of criminal activities.

(c) *Criteria.* An order under this section may be entered only if the court determines that good cause exists. To make this determination the court must find:

(1) There is reason to believe that an employee or agent of a VA treatment program is engaged in criminal activity;

(2) Other ways of obtaining evidence of this criminal activity are not available or would not be effective; and

(3) The public interest and need for the placement of an undercover agent or informant in the VA treatment program outweigh the potential injury to patients of the program, physician-patient relationships and the treatment services.

(d) *Content of order.* An order authorizing the placement of an undercover agent or informant in a VA treatment program must:

(1) Specifically authorize the placement of an undercover agent or an informant;

(2) Limit the total period of the placement to six months;

(3) Prohibit the undercover agent or informant from disclosing any patient identifying information obtained from the placement except as necessary to criminally investigate or prosecute

employees or agents of the VA treatment program; and

(4) Include any other measures which are appropriate to limit any potential disruption of the program by the placement and any potential for a real or apparent breach of patient confidentiality; for example, sealing from public scrutiny the record of any proceeding for which disclosure of a patient's record has been ordered.

(e) *Limitation on use of information.* No information obtained by an undercover agent or informant placed under this section may be used to criminally investigate or prosecute any patient or as the basis for an application for an order under § 1.494 of this part.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7334)

### §§ 1.497-1.499 [Reserved]

### RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLAIMANT RECORDS

NOTE: Sections 1.500 through 1.527 concern the availability and release of information from files, records, reports, and other papers and documents in Department of Veterans Affairs custody pertaining to claims under any of the laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As to the release of information from Department of Veterans Affairs records other than claimant records, see §§ 1.550 through 1.558. Sections 1.500 through 1.526 implement the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5701, 5702.

[32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967]

AUTHORITY: Sections 1.500 to 1.527 issued under 72 Stat. 1114, 1236, as amended; 38 U.S.C. 501, 5701.

### § 1.500 General.

(a) Files, records, reports, and other papers and documents pertaining to any claim filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs, whether pending or adjudicated, and the names and addresses of present or former personnel of the armed services, and their dependents, in the possession of the Department of Veterans Affairs, will be deemed confidential and privileged, and no disclosure therefrom will be made except in the circumstances and under the conditions set forth in §§ 1.501 through 1.526.

(b) A claimant may not have access to or custody of official Department of

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Veterans Affairs records concerning himself or herself nor may a claimant inspect records concerning himself or herself. Disclosure of information from Department of Veterans Affairs records to a claimant or his or her duly authorized agent or representative may be made, however, under the provisions of §§ 1.501 through 1.526.

(c) Each administration, staff office, and field facility head will designate an employee(s) who will be responsible for initial action on (granting or denying) requests to inspect or obtain information from or copies of records under their jurisdiction and within the purview of §§ 1.501 through 1.526 unless the regulations in this part currently contain such designations. The request should be made to the office concerned (having jurisdiction of the record desired) or, if not known, to the Director or Veterans Assistance Officer in the nearest VA regional office, or to the VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Personal contacts should normally be made during the regular duty hours of the office concerned, which are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, for VA Central Office and most field facilities. Any legal question arising in a field facility concerning the release of information will be referred to the appropriate Regional Counsel for disposition as contemplated by § 13.401 of this chapter. In central office such legal questions will be referred to the General Counsel. Any administrative question will be referred through administrative channels to the appropriate administration or staff office head.

(d) Upon denial of a request under paragraph (c) of this section, the responsible Department of Veterans Affairs official or designated employee will inform the requester in writing of the denial and advise him or her that he or she may appeal the denial. The requester will also be furnished the title and address of the Department of Veterans Affairs official to whom the appeal should be addressed. (See § 1.527.) In each instance of denial of a request, the denial will be made a matter of record and the record will contain a citation to the specific provision of Department of Veterans Affairs reg-

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ulations upon which the denial is based.

[24 FR 8174, Oct. 8, 1959, as amended at 32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967; 38 FR 15601, June 14, 1973]

### § 1.501 Release of information by the Secretary.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Deputy Secretary may release information, statistics, or reports to individuals or organizations when in the Secretary's or Deputy Secretary's judgment such release would serve a useful purpose.

[32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967, as amended at 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

### § 1.502 Disclosure of the amount of monetary benefits.

The monthly rate of pension, compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, retirement pay, subsistence allowance, or educational assistance allowance of any beneficiary shall be made known to any person who applies for such information.

[32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967]

### § 1.503 Disclosure of information to a veteran or his or her duly authorized representative as to matters concerning the veteran alone.

Information may be disclosed to a veteran or his or her duly authorized representative as to matters concerning himself or herself alone when such disclosure would not be injurious to the physical or mental health of the veteran. If the veteran be deceased, matters concerning him or her may be disclosed to his widow, children, or next of kin if such disclosure will not be injurious to the physical or mental health of the person in whose behalf information is sought or cause repugnance or resentment toward the decedent.

[13 FR 6999, Nov. 27, 1948]

### § 1.504 Disclosure of information to a widow, child, or other claimant.

Information may be disclosed to a widow, widower, child, or other dependent parent or other claimant, or the duly authorized representative of any of these persons as to matters concerning such person alone when such disclosure will not be injurious to the

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physical or mental health of the person to whom the inquiry relates. If the person concerning whom the information is sought is deceased, matters concerning such person may be disclosed to the next of kin if the disclosures will not be injurious to the physical or mental health of the person in whose behalf the information is sought or cause repugnance or resentment toward the decedent.

[13 FR 6999, Nov. 27, 1948, as amended at 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

### § 1.505 Genealogy.

Information of a genealogical nature when its disclosure will not be detrimental to the memory of the veteran and not prejudicial, so far as may be apparent, to the interests of any living person or to the interests of the Government may be released by the Department of Veterans Affairs or in the case of inactive records may be released by the Archivist of the United States if in the Archivist's custody.

[13 FR 6999, Nov. 27, 1948]

### § 1.506 Disclosure of records to Federal Government departments, State unemployment compensation agencies, and the Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

(a) All records or documents required for official purposes by any department or other agency of the U.S. Government or any state unemployment compensation agency acting in an official capacity for the Department of Veterans Affairs shall be furnished in response to an official request, written, or oral, from such department or agency. If the requesting department or agency does not indicate the purpose for which the records or documents are requested and there is doubt as to whether they are to be used for official purposes, the requesting department or agency will be asked to specify the purpose for which they are to be used.

(b) The Under Secretary for Benefits, Director of Insurance Service, or designee of either in Central Office, is authorized to release information to OSGLI (Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance) for the purpose

of aiding in the settlement of a particular insurance case.

[33 FR 2994, Feb. 15, 1968]

### § 1.507 Disclosures to members of Congress.

Members of Congress shall be furnished in their official capacity in any case such information contained in the Department of Veterans Affairs files as may be requested for official use. However, in any unusual case, the request will be presented to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or staff or administration head for personal action. When the requested information is of a type which may not be furnished a claimant, the member of Congress shall be advised that the information is furnished to him or her confidentially in his official capacity and should be so treated by him or her. (See 38 U.S.C. 5701.) Information concerning the beneficiary designation of a United States Government Life Insurance or National Service Life Insurance policy is deemed confidential and privileged and during the insured's lifetime shall not be disclosed to anyone other than the insured or his or her duly appointed fiduciary unless the insured or the fiduciary authorizes the release of such information.

[32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967]

### § 1.508 Disclosure in cases where claimants are charged with or convicted of criminal offenses.

(a) Where incompetent claimants are charged with, or convicted of, offenses other than those growing out of their relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs and in which it is desired to disclose information from the files and records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Regional Counsel, Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration, or the General Counsel if the General Counsel deems it necessary and proper, may disclose to the court having jurisdiction so much of the information from the files and records of the Department of Veterans Affairs relating to the mental condition of such beneficiaries, the same to be available as evidence, as may be necessary to show the mental condition of the accused and the time

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of its onset. This provision, however, does not alter the general procedure for handling offenses growing out of relations with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) When desired by a U.S. district court, the Regional Counsel or the General Counsel may supply information as to whether any person charged with crime served in the military or naval service of the United States and whether the Department of Veterans Affairs has a file on such person. If the file is desired either by the court or by the prosecution or defense, it may be produced only in accord with §§1.501 through 1.526.

[21 FR 10375, Dec. 28, 1956, as amended at 32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967; 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

### **§ 1.509 Disclosure to courts in proceedings in the nature of an inquest.**

The Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration, Regional Counsels, and facility heads are authorized to make disclosures to courts of competent jurisdiction of such files, records, reports, and other documents as are necessary and proper evidence in proceedings in the nature of an inquest into the mental competency of claimants and other proceedings incident to the appointment and discharge of guardians, curators, or conservators to any court having jurisdiction of such fiduciaries in all matters of appointment, discharge, or accounting in such courts.

[32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967]

### **§ 1.510 Disclosure to insurance companies cooperating with the Department of Justice in the defense of insurance suits against the United States.**

Copies of records from the files of the Department of Veterans Affairs will, in the event of litigation involving commercial insurance policies issued by an insurance company cooperating with the Department of Justice in defense of insurance suits against the United States, be furnished to such companies without charge, provided the claimant or his or her duly authorized representative has authorized the release of the information contained in such records.

If the release of information is not authorized in writing by the claimant or his or her duly authorized representative, information contained in the files may be furnished to such company if to withhold same would tend to permit the accomplishment of a fraud or miscarriage of justice. However, before such information may be released without the consent of the claimant, the request therefor must be accompanied by an affidavit of the representative of the insurance company, setting forth that litigation is pending, the character of the suit, and the purpose for which the information desired is to be used. If such information is to be used adversely to the claimant, the affidavit must set forth facts from which it may be determined by the General Counsel or Regional Counsel whether the furnishing of the information is necessary to prevent the perpetration of a fraud or other injustice. The averments contained in such affidavit should be considered in connection with the facts shown by the claimant's file, and, if such consideration shows the disclosure of the record is necessary and proper to prevent a fraud or other injustice, information as to the contents thereof may be furnished to the insurance company or copies of the records may be furnished to the court, workmen's compensation, or similar board in which the litigation is pending upon receipt of a subpoena duces tecum addressed to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or the head of the office in which the records desired are located. In the event the subpoena requires the production of the file, as distinguished from the copies of the records, no expense to the Department of Veterans Affairs may be involved in complying therewith, and arrangements must be made with the representative of the insurance company causing the issuance of the subpoena to insure submission of the file to the court without expense to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

[32 FR 10848, July 25, 1967]

### **§ 1.511 Disclosure of claimant records in connection with judicial proceedings generally.**

(a)(1) Where a suit (or legal proceeding) has been threatened or instituted against the Government, or a

prosecution against a claimant has been instituted or is being contemplated, the request of the claimant or his or her duly authorized representative for information, documents, reports, etc., shall be acted upon by the General Counsel in Central Office, or the Regional Counsel for the field facility, who shall determine the action to be taken with respect thereto. Where the records have been sent to the Department of Justice in connection with any such suit (or legal proceeding), the request will be referred to the Department of Justice, Washington, DC, through the office of the General Counsel, for attention. Where the records have been sent to an Assistant U.S. Attorney, the request will be referred by the appropriate Regional Counsel to the Assistant U.S. Attorney. In all other cases where copies of documents or records are desired by or on behalf of parties to a suit (or legal proceeding), whether in a Federal court or any other, such copies shall be disclosed as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section where the request is accompanied by court process, or paragraph (e) of this section where the request is not accompanied by court process. A court process, such as a court order or subpoena duces tecum should be addressed to either the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or to the head of the field facility at which the records desired are located. The determination as to the action to be taken upon any request for the disclosure of claimant records received in this class of cases shall be made by the component having jurisdiction over the subject matter in Central Office, or the division having jurisdiction over the subject matter in the field facility, except in those cases in which representatives of the component or division have determined that the records desired are to be used adversely to the claimant, in which event the process will be referred to the General Counsel in Central Office or to the Regional Counsel for the field facility for disposition.

(2) Where a claim under the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act has been filed, or where such a claim can reasonably be anticipated, no information, documents, reports, etc., will be disclosed except through the

Regional Counsel having jurisdiction, who will limit the disclosure of information to that which would be available under discovery proceedings, if the matter were in litigation. Any other information may be disclosed only after concurrence in such disclosure is provided by the General Counsel.

(b) *Disclosures in response to Federal court process*—(1) *Court order*. Except for drug and alcohol abuse, human immunodeficiency virus and sickle cell anemia treatment records, which are protected under 38 U.S.C. 7332, where the records sought are maintained in a VA Privacy Act system of records, and are retrieved by the name or other personal identifier of a living claimant who is a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, a Federal court order is the process necessary for the disclosure of such records. Upon receipt of a Federal court order directing disclosure of claimant records, such records will be disclosed. Disclosure of records protected under 38 U.S.C. 7332 will be made in accordance with provisions of paragraph (g) of this section.

(2) *Subpoena*. Except for drug and alcohol abuse, human immunodeficiency virus and sickle cell anemia treatment records, which are protected under 38 U.S.C. 7332, where the records sought are maintained in a VA Privacy Act system of records, and are retrieved by the name or other personal identifier of a claimant, a subpoena is not sufficient authority for the disclosure of such records and such records will not be disclosed, unless the claimant is deceased, or either is not a citizen of the United States, or is an alien not lawfully admitted for permanent residence. Where one of these exceptions applies, upon receipt of a Federal court subpoena, such records will be disclosed. Additionally, where the subpoena is accompanied by authorization from the claimant, disclosure will be made. Regarding the disclosure of medical records pertaining to drug and alcohol abuse, human immunodeficiency virus and sickle cell anemia treatment, a subpoena is insufficient for such disclosure. Specific provisions for the disclosure of these records are set forth in paragraph (g) of this section.

(3) A disclosure of records in response to the receipt of a Federal court process will be made to those individuals designated in the process to receive such records, or to the court from which the process issued. Where original records are produced, they must remain at all times in the custody of a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and, if offered and received in evidence, permission should be obtained to substitute a copy so that the original may remain intact in the record. Where a court process is issued by or on behalf of a party litigant other than the United States, such party litigant must prepay the costs of copies in accordance with fees prescribed by § 1.526(i) and any other costs incident to producing the records.

(c) *Disclosures in response to state or local court process*—(1) *State or local court order.* Except for drug and alcohol abuse, human immunodeficiency virus and sickle cell anemia treatment records, which are protected under 38 U.S.C. 7332, where the records sought are maintained in a VA Privacy Act system of records, and are retrieved by the name or other personal identifier of a living claimant who is a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, a State or local court order is the process necessary for disclosure of such records. Upon receipt of a State or local court order directing disclosure of claimant records, disclosure of such records will be made in accordance with the provisions set forth in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. Disclosure of records protected under 38 U.S.C. 7332 will be made in accordance with provisions of paragraph (g) of this section.

(2) *State or local court subpoena.* Except for drug and alcohol abuse, human immunodeficiency virus and sickle cell anemia treatment records, which are protected under 38 U.S.C. 7332, where the records sought are maintained in a VA Privacy Act system of records, and are retrieved by the name or other personal identifier of a claimant, a subpoena is not sufficient authority for disclosure of such records and such records will not be disclosed unless the claimant is deceased, or, either is not a citizen of the United States, or is an

alien not lawfully admitted for permanent residence. Where one of these exceptions applies, upon receipt of a State or local court subpoena directing disclosure of claimant records, disclosure of such records will be made in accordance with the provisions set forth in paragraph (c)(3), of this section. Regarding the disclosure of 7332 records, a subpoena is insufficient for such disclosure. Specific provisions for the disclosure of these records are set forth in paragraph (g) of this section.

(3) Where the disclosure provisions of paragraph (c) (1) or (2) of this section apply, disclosure will be made as follows:

(i) When the process presented is accompanied by authority from the claimant; or,

(ii) In the absence of claimant disclosure authority, the Regional Counsel having jurisdiction must determine whether the disclosure of the records is necessary to prevent the perpetration of fraud or other injustice in the matter in question. To make such a determination, the Regional Counsel may require such additional documentation, e.g., affidavit, letter of explanation, or such other documentation which would detail the need for such disclosure, set forth the character of the pending suit, and the purpose for which the documents or records sought are to be used as evidence. The claimant's record may also be considered in the making of such determination. Where a court process is received, and the Regional Counsel finds that additional documentation will be needed to make the foregoing determination, the Regional Counsel, or other employee having reasonable knowledge of the requirements of this regulation, shall contact the person causing the issuance of such court process, and advise that person of the need for additional documentation. Where a court appearance is appropriate, and the Regional Counsel has found that there is an insufficient basis upon which to warrant a disclosure of the requested information, the Regional Counsel, or other employee having reasonable knowledge of the requirement of this regulation and having consulted with the Regional Counsel, shall appear in court and advise

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the court that VA records are confidential and privileged and may be disclosed only in accordance with applicable Federal regulations, and to further advise the court of such regulatory requirements and how they have not been satisfied. Where indicated, the Regional Counsel will take appropriate action to have the matter of disclosure of the affected records removed to Federal court.

(4) Any disclosure of records in response to the receipt of State or local court process will be made to those individuals designated in the process to receive such records, or to the court from which such process issued. Payment of the fees as prescribed by §1.526(i), as well as any other cost incident to producing the records, must first be deposited with the Department of Veterans Affairs by the party who caused the process to be issued. The original records must remain at all times in the custody of a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and, if there is an offer and admission of any record or document contained therein, permission should be obtained to substitute a copy so that the original may remain intact in the record.

(d) Notice requirements where disclosures are made pursuant to court process. Whenever a disclosure of Privacy Act protected records is made in response to the process of a Federal, State, or local court, the custodian of the records disclosed will make reasonable efforts to notify the subject of such records that such subject's records were disclosed to another person under compulsory legal process. Such notice should be accomplished when the process compelling disclosure becomes a matter of public record. Generally, a notice sent to the last known address of the subject would be sufficient to comply with this requirement.

(e) Disclosures in response to requests when not accompanied by court process. Requests received from attorneys or others for copies of records for use in suits in which the Government is not involved, not accompanied by a court process, will be handled by the component or division having jurisdiction over the subject matter. If the re-

quest can be complied with under §1.503 or §1.504, and under the Privacy Act (to the extent that such records are protected by the Privacy Act), the records requested will be disclosed upon receipt of the required fee. If, however, the records cannot be furnished under such authority, the applicant will be advised of the procedure to obtain copies of records as set forth in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(f) Suits by or against the Secretary under 38 U.S.C. 3720. Records pertaining to the loan guaranteed, insured, or made by the Department of Veterans Affairs may be made available by the General Counsel or the Regional Counsel subject to the usual rules of evidence, and where authorized under the Privacy Act, after clearance with the Department of Justice or U.S. Attorney if appropriate.

(g) Disclosure of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, human immunodeficiency virus and sickle cell anemia treatment or related records under court process. Disclosure of these types of records, which are protected from unauthorized disclosure under 38 U.S.C. 7332, may be made only in response to an appropriate order of a court of competent jurisdiction granted after application showing good cause therefore. In assessing good cause the court is required to weigh the public interest and the need for disclosure against the injury to the patient or subject, to the physician-patient relationship, and to the treatment services. The court, in determining the extent to which any disclosure of all or any part of any record is necessary, shall impose appropriate safeguards against unauthorized disclosure. As to a Federal court order satisfying the requirements of this paragraph, the records will be disclosed as provided in such order. As to a State or local court order satisfying the requirements of this subsection, the disclosure of the records involved is conditioned upon satisfying the provisions set forth in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. If the aforementioned section is satisfied, and a disclosure of records is to be forthcoming, the records will be

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disclosed as provided in the court order.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552; 5 U.S.C. 552a; 38 U.S.C. 5701 and 38 U.S.C. 7332)

[56 FR 15833, Apr. 18, 1991]

### § 1.512 Disclosure of loan guaranty information.

(a) The disclosure of records or information contained in loan guaranty files is governed by the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552; the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a; the confidentiality provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5701, and the provisions of 38 CFR 1.500–1.584. In addition, the release of names and addresses and the release of certificates of reasonable value, appraisal reports, property inspection reports, or reports of inspection on individual water supply and sewage disposal systems shall be governed by paragraphs (b), (c), (d), and (e) of this section.

(b)(1) Upon request, any person is entitled to obtain copies of certificates of reasonable value, appraisal reports, property inspection reports, or reports of inspection on individual water supply and sewage disposal systems provided that the individual identifiers of the veteran-purchaser(s) or dependents are deleted prior to release of such documents. However, individual identifiers may be disclosed in accordance with paragraph (b)(2) of this section. The address of the property being appraised or inspected shall not be considered an individual identifier.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5701(a), (c))

(2) Individual identifiers of veteran purchasers or dependents may be disclosed when disclosure is made to the following:

- (i) The individual purchasing the property;
- (ii) The current owner of the property;
- (iii) The individual that requested the appraisal or report;
- (iv) A person or entity which is considering making a loan to an individual with respect to the property concerned; or

(v) An attorney, real estate broker, or any other agent representing any of these persons.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5701(c), (h)(2)(D))

(c)(1) The Secretary may release the name, address, or both, and may release other information relating to the identity of an applicant for or recipient of a Department of Veterans Affairs-guaranteed, insured, or direct loan, specially adapted housing grant, loan to finance acquisition of Department of Veterans Affairs-owned property, release of liability, or substitution of entitlement to credit reporting agencies, companies or individuals extending credit, depository institutions, insurance companies, investors, lenders, employers, landlords, utility companies and governmental agencies for any of the purposes specified in paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(2) A release may be made under paragraph (c)(1) of this section:

- (i) To enable such parties to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with data which assists in determining the creditworthiness, credit capacity, income or financial resources of the applicant for or recipient of loan guaranty administered benefits, or verifying whether any such data previously received is accurate; or
- (ii) To enable the Secretary to offer for sale or other disposition any loan or installment sale contract.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5701(h)(2)(A), (B), (C))

(d) Upon request, the Secretary may release information relating to the individual's loan transaction to credit reporting agencies, companies or individuals extending credit, depository institutions, insurance companies, investors, lenders, employers, landlords, utility companies and governmental agencies where necessary in connection with a transfer of information on the status of a Department of Veterans Affairs loan account to persons or organizations proposing to extend credit or render services or other benefits to the borrower in order that the person or organization may determine whether to extend credit or render services or other benefits to the borrower. Such



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releases shall be made only if the person or organization seeking the information furnishes the individual's name, address or other information necessary to identify the individual.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5701(e), (h)(2)(A) and (D))

(e) The Secretary shall maintain information in the loan guaranty file consisting of the date, notice and purpose of each disclosure, and the name and address of the person to whom the disclosure is made from the loan guaranty files.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5701(h)(2)(D), 5 U.S.C. 552a(c))

[47 FR 11279, Mar. 16, 1982]

### **§ 1.513 Disclosure of information contained in Armed Forces service and related medical records in Department of Veterans Affairs custody.**

(a) *Service records.* Information received by the Department of Veterans Affairs from the Departments of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Department of Transportation relative to the military or naval service of a claimant is furnished solely for the official use of the Department of Veterans Affairs but such information may be disclosed under the limitations contained in §§ 1.501 through 1.526.

(b) *Medical records.* Information contained in the medical records (including clinical records and social data) may be released under the following conditions:

(1) Complete transcript of résumé or medical records on request to:

- (i) The Department of the Army.
- (ii) The Department of the Navy (including naval aviation and United States Marine Corps).
- (iii) The Department of the Air Force.
- (iv) The Department of Transportation (Coast Guard).
- (v) Selective Service (in case of registrants only).
- (vi) Federal or State hospitals or penal institutions when the veteran is a patient or inmate therein.
- (vii) United States Public Health Service, or other governmental or contract agency in connection with research authorized by, or conducted for, the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(viii) Registered civilian physicians, on the request of the individual or his or her legal representative, when required in connection with the treatment of the veteran. (The transcript or resume should be accompanied by the statement "it is expected that the information contained herein will be treated as confidential, as is customary in civilian professional medical practice.")

(ix) The veteran on request, except information contained in the medical record which would prove injurious to his or her physical or mental health.

(x) The next of kin on request of the individual, or legal representative, when the information may not be disclosed to the veteran because it will prove injurious to his or her physical or mental health, and it will not be injurious to the physical or mental health of the next of kin or cause repugnance or resentment toward the veteran; and directly to the next of kin, or legal representative, when the veteran has been declared to be insane or is dead.

(xi) Health and social agencies, on the authority of the veteran or his or her duly authorized representative.

(2) In addition to the authorizations in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury, and the U.S. Postal Service may, on request, be given pertinent information from medical records for use in connection with investigations conducted by these departments. Each such request shall be considered on its merits, and the information released should be the minimum necessary in connection with the investigation conducted by these departments.

(3) Compliance with court orders calling for the production of medical records in connection with litigation or criminal prosecutions will be effected in accordance with § 1.511.

[13 FR 7001, Nov. 27, 1948, as amended at 32 FR 10849, July 25, 1967; 60 FR 63938, Dec. 13, 1995]

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**§ 1.514 Disclosure to private physicians and hospitals other than Department of Veterans Affairs.**

(a) When a beneficiary elects to obtain medical attention as a private patient from a private practitioner or in a medical center other than a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, there may be disclosed to such private practitioner or head of such medical center (Federal, State, municipal, or private), such information as to the medical history, diagnosis, findings, or treatment as is requested, including the loan of original X-ray films, whether Department of Veterans Affairs clinical X-rays or service department entrance and separation X-rays, provided there is also submitted a written authorization from the beneficiary or his or her duly authorized representative. The information will be supplied without charge directly to the private physician or medical center head and not through the beneficiary or representative. In forwarding this information, it will be accompanied by the stipulations that it is released with consent of or on behalf of the patient and that the information will be treated as confidential, as is customary in civilian professional medical practice.

(b) Such information may be released without charge and without consent of the patient or his or her duly authorized representative when a request for such information is received from:

(1) The superintendent of a State hospital for psychotic patients, a commissioner or head of a State department of mental hygiene, or head of a State, county, or city health department; or

(2) Any fee basis physician or institution in connection with authorized treatment of the veteran as a Department of Veterans Affairs beneficiary; or

(3) Any physician or medical installation treating the veteran under emergency conditions.

[34 FR 13368, Aug. 19, 1969, as amended at 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

**§ 1.514a Disclosure to private psychologists.**

When a beneficiary elects to obtain therapy or analysis as a private patient from a private psychologist, such information in the medical record as may be

pertinent may be released. Generally, only information developed and documented by Department of Veterans Affairs psychologists will be considered pertinent, although other information from the medical record may be released if it is determined to be pertinent and will serve a useful purpose to the private psychologist in rendering his or her services. Information will be released under this section upon receipt of the written authorization of the beneficiary or his or her duly authorized representative. Information will be forwarded to private psychologists directly, not through the beneficiary or representative, without charge and with the stipulation that it is released with consent of or on behalf of the patient and must be treated as confidential as is customary in regular professional practice.

[34 FR 13368, Aug. 19, 1969]

**§ 1.515 To commanding officers of State soldiers' homes.**

When a request is received in a Department of Veterans Affairs regional office, center, or medical center from the commanding officer of a State soldiers' home for information other than information relative to the character of the discharge from a Department of Veterans Affairs center or medical center concerning a veteran formerly domiciled or hospitalized therein, the provisions of § 1.500 are applicable, and no disclosure will be made unless the request is accompanied by the authorization outlined in § 1.503. However, station heads, upon receipt of a request from the commanding officer of a State soldiers' home for the character of the discharge of a veteran from a period of hospital treatment or domiciliary care as a beneficiary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, will comply with the request, restricting the information disclosed solely to the character of the veteran's discharge from such treatment or care. Such information will be disclosed only upon receipt of a specific request therefor from the commanding officer of a State soldiers' home.

[30 FR 6435, May 8, 1965]

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### **§ 1.516 Disclosure of information to undertaker concerning burial of a deceased veteran.**

When an undertaker requests information believed to be necessary in connection with the burial of a deceased veteran, such as the name and address of the beneficiary of the veteran's Government insurance policy, name and address of the next of kin, rank or grade of veteran and organization in which he or she served, character of the veteran's discharge, or date and place of birth of the veteran, and it appears that the undertaker is holding the body awaiting receipt of the information requested, the undertaker, in such instances, may be considered the duly authorized representative of the deceased veteran for the purpose of obtaining said information. In ordinary cases, however, the undertaker will be advised that information concerning the beneficiary of a Government insurance policy is confidential and cannot be disclosed; the beneficiary will be advised immediately of the inquiry, and the furnishing of the desired information will be discretionary with the beneficiary. In no case will the undertaker be informed of the net amount due under the policy or furnished information not specifically mentioned in this paragraph.

[46 FR 62059, Dec. 22, 1981]

### **§ 1.517 Disclosure of vocational rehabilitation and education information to educational institutions cooperating with the Department of Veterans Affairs.**

Requests from educational institutions and agencies cooperating with the Department of Veterans Affairs in the vocational rehabilitation and education of veterans for the use of vocational rehabilitation and education records for research studies will be forwarded to central office with the facility head's recommendation for review by the Under Secretary for Benefits. Where the request to conduct a research study is approved by the Under Secretary for Benefits, the facility head is authorized by this section to release information for such studies from vocational rehabilitation and education records as required: *Provided, however,* That any data or information

obtained shall not be published without prior approval of the Under Secretary for Benefits and that data contained in published material shall not identify any individual veteran.

[30 FR 6435, May 8, 1965]

### **§ 1.518 Addresses of claimants.**

(a) It is the general policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs to refuse to furnish addresses from its records to persons who desire such information for debt collection, canvassing, harassing or for propaganda purposes.

(b) The address of a Department of Veterans Affairs claimant as shown by Department of Veterans Affairs files may be furnished to:

(1) Duly constituted police or court officials upon official request and the submission of a certified copy either of the indictment returned against the claimant or of the warrant issued for his or her arrest.

(2) Police, other law enforcement agencies, or Federal, State, county, or city welfare agencies upon official written request showing that the purpose of the request is to locate a parent who has deserted his or her child or children and that other reasonable efforts to obtain an address have failed. The address will not be released when such disclosure would be prejudicial to the mental or physical health of the claimant. When an address is furnished it will be accompanied by the stipulation that it is furnished on a confidential basis and may not be disclosed to any other individual or agency.

(c) When an address is requested that may not be furnished under §§ 1.500 through 1.526, the person making the request will be informed that a letter, or in those cases involving judicial actions, the process or notice in judicial proceedings, enclosed in an unsealed envelope showing no return address, with the name of the addressee thereon, and bearing sufficient postage to cover mailing costs will be forwarded by the Department of Veterans Affairs. If a request indicates that judicial action is involved in which a process or notice in judicial proceedings is required to be forwarded, the Department of Veterans Affairs will inform the person who requests the forwarding of such a document that the envelope

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must bear sufficient postage to cover costs of mailing and certified or registered mailing fees, including cost of obtaining receipt for the certified or registered mail when transmission by this type special mail is desired. At the time the letter, process, or notice in judicial proceedings is forwarded, the facility's return address will be placed on the envelope. When the receipt for certified or registered mail or the undelivered envelope is returned to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the original sender will be notified thereof. However, the receipt or the envelope will be retained by the Department of Veterans Affairs. This provision will be applicable only when it does not interfere unduly with the functions of the Service or division concerned. In no event will letters be forwarded to aid in the collection of debts or for the purpose of canvassing, harassing, or propaganda. Neither will a letter be forwarded if the contents could be harmful to the physical or mental health of the recipient.

(d) Subject to the conditions set forth in § 1.922, the Department of Veterans Affairs may disclose to consumer reporting agencies information contained in a debtor's claims folder. Such information may include the debtor's name and/or address, Department of Veterans Affairs file number, Social Security number, and date of birth.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5701(g))

[33 FR 10516, July 24, 1968 and 35 FR 5176, Mar. 27, 1970, as amended at 46 FR 62059, Dec. 22, 1981]

**§ 1.519 Lists of names and addresses.**

(a) Any organization wanting a list of names and addresses of present or former personnel of the armed services and their dependents from the Department of Veterans Affairs must make written application to the Department of Veterans Affairs Controller, except lists of educationally disadvantaged veterans should be requested from the Director of the nearest regional office. The application must:

(1) Clearly identify the type or category of names and addresses sought;

(2) Furnish proof satisfactory to the Department of Veterans Affairs that the organization seeking the list is a "nonprofit organization." Normally,

evidence establishing that the organization is exempt from taxation in accordance with the provisions of 26 U.S.C. 501 or is a governmental body or institution will be accepted as satisfying this criteria;

(3) Contain a statement clearly setting forth the purpose for which the list is sought, the programs and the resources the organization proposes to devote to this purpose, and establish how such purpose is "directly connected with the conduct of programs and the utilization of benefits" under title 38, U.S.C.; and

(4) Contain a certification that the organization, and all members thereof who will have access to the list, are aware of the penalty provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5701(f) and will not use the list for any purpose other than that stated in the application.

(b) If the Director of the regional office concerned finds that the organization requesting the list of names and addresses of educationally disadvantaged veterans is a nonprofit organization and operates an approved program of special secondary, remedial, preparatory or other educational or supplementary assistance to veterans as provided under subchapter V, title 38 U.S.C., then he or she may authorize the release of such names and addresses to the organization requesting them.

(c) The Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information Resources Management, with the concurrence of the General Counsel, is authorized to release lists of names and addresses to organizations which have applied for such lists in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section if he or she finds that the purpose for which the organization desires the names and addresses is directly connected with the conduct of programs and the utilization of benefits under title 38 U.S.C. Lists of names and addresses authorized to be released pursuant to this paragraph shall not duplicate lists released to other elements, segments, or chapters of the same organization.

(d) If the list requested is one that the Department of Veterans Affairs has previously compiled or created, in the same format, to carry out one or more of its basic program responsibilities

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and it is determined that it can be released, the list may be furnished without charge. For other types of lists, a charge will be made in accordance with the provisions of § 1.526.

(e) Upon denial of a request, the Department of Veterans Affairs Controller or Regional Office Director will inform the requester in writing of the denial and the reasons therefor and advise the organization that it may appeal the denial to the General Counsel. In each instance of a denial of a request, the denial and the reasons therefor will be made a matter of record.

(f) Section 5701(f), title 38 U.S.C., provides that any organization, or member thereof, which uses the names and addresses furnished it for any purpose other than one directly connected with the conduct of programs and the utilization of benefits under title 38 U.S.C., shall be fined not more than \$500 in the case of the first offense and not more than \$5,000 in the case of the subsequent offenses. Any instance in which there is evidence of a violation of these penal provisions will be reported in accordance with § 14.560.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900-0438)

[38 FR 15601, June 14, 1973, as amended at 46 FR 62059, Dec. 22, 1981; 49 FR 32848, Aug. 17, 1984; 56 FR 59218, Nov. 25, 1991]

### § 1.520 Confidentiality of social data.

Persons having access to social data will be conscious of the fact that the family, acquaintances, and even the veteran have been willing to reveal these data only on the promise that they will be held in complete confidence. There will be avoided direct, ill-considered references which may jeopardize the personal safety of these individuals and the relationship existing among them, the patient, and the social worker, or may destroy their mutual confidence and influence, rendering it impossible to secure further cooperation from these individuals and agencies. Physicians in talking with beneficiaries will not quote these data directly but will regard them as indicating possible directions toward which they may wish to guide the patient's self-revelations without reproaching the patient for his or her behavior or arousing natural curiosity or suspicion

regarding any informant's statement. The representatives of service organizations and duly authorized representatives of veterans will be especially cautioned as to their grave responsibility in this connection.

[46 FR 62059, Dec. 22, 1981]

### § 1.521 Special restrictions concerning social security records.

Information received from the Social Security Administration may be filed in the veteran's claims folder without special provisions. Such information will be deemed privileged and may not be released by the Department of Veterans Affairs except that information concerning the amount of social security benefits paid to a claimant or the amount of social security tax contributions made by the claimant may be disclosed to the claimant or his or her duly authorized representative. Any request from outside the Department of Veterans Affairs for other social security information will be referred to the Social Security Administration for such action as they deem proper.

[27 FR 9599, Sept. 28, 1962]

### § 1.522 Determination of the question as to whether disclosure will be prejudicial to the mental or physical health of claimant.

Determination of the question when disclosure of information from the files, records, and reports will be prejudicial to the mental or physical health of the claimant, beneficiary, or other person in whose behalf information is sought, will be made by the Chief Medical Director; Chief of Staff of a hospital; or the Director of an outpatient clinic.

[33 FR 19009, Dec. 20, 1968]

### § 1.523 [Reserved]

### § 1.524 Persons authorized to represent claimants.

A duly authorized representative will be:

(a) Any person authorized in writing by the claimant to act for him or her,

(b) An attorney who has filed the declaration required by § 14.629(b)(1) of this chapter, or

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(c) His or her legally constituted fiduciary, if the claimant is incompetent. Where for proper reasons no legally constituted fiduciary has been or will be appointed, his or her spouse, his or her children, or, if the claimant is unmarried, either of his or her parents shall be recognized as the fiduciary of the claimant.

[33 FR 6536, Apr. 30, 1968]

**§ 1.525 Inspection of records by or disclosure of information to recognized representatives of organizations and recognized attorneys.**

(a)(1) The accredited representatives of recognized organizations (§14.627 of this chapter) holding appropriate power of attorney and recognized attorneys (§14.629(b) of this chapter) with the written authorization of the claimant may, subject to the restrictions imposed by paragraph (a)(2) of this section, inspect the claims, insurance and allied folders of any claimant upon the condition that only such information contained therein as may be properly disclosed under §§1.500 through 1.526 will be disclosed by him or her to the claimant or, if the claimant is incompetent, to his or her legally constituted fiduciary. Under the same restrictions, it is permissible to release information from and permit inspection of loan guaranty folders in which a request for a waiver of the debt of a veteran or his or her spouse has been received, or where there has been a denial of basic eligibility for loan guaranty benefits. All other information in the files shall be treated as confidential and will be used only in determining the status of the cases inspected or in connection with the presentation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs of the claim of the claimant. The heads of field facilities and the directors of the services concerned in Central Office will each designate a responsible officer to whom requests for all files must be made, except that managers of centers with insurance activities will designate two responsible officials, recommended by the division chiefs concerned, one responsible for claims and allied folders and the other for insurance files. The term *claimant* as used in this paragraph includes insureds.

(2) In the case of a living veteran a representative acting under a power of attorney from any person not acting on behalf of the veteran will not be permitted to review the records of the veteran or be furnished any information therefrom to which the person is not entitled, i.e., information not relating to such person alone. Powers of attorney submitted by the other person will be considered "Limited" and will be so noted when associated with the veteran's records. The provisions of this subparagraph are also applicable to recognized attorneys and the requisite declarations filed by them.

(3) When power of attorney does not obtain, the accredited representative will explain to the designated officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs the reason for requesting information from the file, and the information will be made available only when in the opinion of the designated officer it is justified; in no circumstances will such representatives be allowed to inspect the file; in such cases a contact report will be made out and attached to the case, outlining the reasons which justify the verbal or written release of the information to the accredited representative.

(4) In any case where there is an unrevoked power of attorney or declaration of representation, no persons or organizations other than the one named in such document shall be afforded information from the file except under the conditions set forth in §14.629(b)(2) of this chapter. When any claimant has filed notice with the Department of Veterans Affairs that he or she does not want his or her file inspected, such file will not be made available for inspection.

(b)(1) Inspection of folders by accredited representatives or recognized attorneys holding a written authorization where such cases are being processed shall be in space assigned for such inspection. Otherwise station heads may permit inspection of folders at the desks of the accredited representatives, in the office(s) which they regularly occupy.

(2) An insured or after maturity of the insurance by death of the insured,

the beneficiary, may authorize the release to a third person of such insurance information as the insured or the beneficiary would be entitled to receive, provided there is submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs, a specific authorization in writing for this purpose.

(3) Unless otherwise authorized by the insured or the beneficiary, as the case may be, such authorized representative, recognized attorney or accredited representative shall not release information as to the designated beneficiary to anyone other than the insured or to the beneficiary after death of the insured. Otherwise, information in the insurance file shall be subject to the provisions of §§ 1.500 through 1.526.

(4) Clinical records and medical files, including files for outpatient treatment, may be inspected by accredited representatives or recognized attorneys holding a written authorization only to the extent such records or parts thereof are incorporated in the claims folder, or are made available to Department of Veterans Affairs personnel in the adjudication of the claim. Records or data in clinical or medical files which are not incorporated in the claims folder or which are not made available to Department of Veterans Affairs personnel for adjudication purposes will not be inspected by anyone other than those employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs whose duties require same for the purpose of clinical diagnosis or medical treatment.

(5) Under no circumstances shall any paper be removed from a file, except by a Department of Veterans Affairs employee, for purpose of having an authorized copy made. Copying of material in a file shall not be permitted except in connection with the performance of authorized functions under the power of attorney or requisite declaration of a recognized attorney.

(6) In any case involving litigation against the Government, whether contemplated or initiated, inspection, subject to the foregoing, shall be within the discretion of the General Counsel or Regional Counsel, except that in insurance suits under 38 U.S.C. 1975, 1984, inspection shall be within the discre-

tion of the official having jurisdiction of the claim. Files in such cases may be released to the Department of Justice, but close liaison will be maintained to insure their return intact upon termination of the litigation.

(c) Facility heads and the directors of the services concerned in central office will be responsible for the administrative compliance with and accomplishment of the foregoing within their jurisdiction, and any violations of the prescribed conditions for inspection of files or release of information therefrom will be brought to the immediate attention of the Secretary.

(d) Any person holding power of attorney, a recognized attorney who has filed the requisite declaration, or the accredited representative of a recognized organization holding power of attorney shall be supplied with a copy of each notice to the claimant respecting the adjudication of the claim. If a claimant dies before action on the claim is completed, the person or organization holding power of attorney or the attorney who has filed the requisite declaration may continue to act until the action is completed except where the power of attorney or requisite declaration was filed on behalf of a dependent.

(e) When in developing a claim the accredited representative of a recognized organization finds it necessary to call upon a local representative to assemble information or evidence, he or she may make such disclosures to the local representative as the circumstances of the case may warrant, provided the power of attorney to the recognized organization contains an authorization permitting such disclosure.

[13 FR 7002, Nov. 27, 1948, as amended at 31 FR 3459, Mar. 5, 1966; 32 FR 10849, July 25, 1967; 33 FR 6536, Apr. 30, 1968]

#### § 1.526 Copies of records and papers.

(a) Any person desiring a copy of any record or document in the custody of the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is subject to be furnished under §§ 1.501 through 1.526, must make written application for such copy to the Department of Veterans Affairs installation having custody of the subject matter desired, stating specifically: (1)

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The particular record or document the copy of which is desired and whether certified and validated, or uncertified, (2) the purpose for which such copy is desired to be used.

(b) The types of services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for which fees will be charged are identified in paragraph (i) of this section.

(c) This section applies to the services furnished in paragraph (b) of this section when rendered to members of the public by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It does not apply to such services when rendered to or for other agencies or branches of the Federal Government, or State and local governments when furnishing the service will help to accomplish an objective of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or when performed in connection with a special research study or compilation when the party requesting such services is charged an amount for the whole job.

(d) When copies of a record or document are furnished under §§1.506, 1.507, 1.510, and 1.514, such copies shall be supplied without charge. Moreover, free service may be provided, to the extent of one copy, to persons who have been required to furnish original documents for retention by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(e) The following are circumstances under which services may be provided free at the discretion of facility heads or responsible Central Office officials:

(1) When requested by a court, when the copy will serve as a substitute for personal court appearance of a Government witness.

(2) When furnishing the service free saves costs or yields income equal to

the direct costs of the agency providing the service. This includes cases where the fee for the service would be included in a billing against the Government (for example, in cost-type contracts, or in the case of private physicians who are treating Government beneficiaries at Government expense).

(3) When a service is occasional and incidental, not of a type that is requested often, and if it is administratively determined that a fee would be inappropriate in such an occasional case.

(f) When information, statistics, or reports are released or furnished under §1.501 or §1.519, the fee charge, if any, will be determined upon the merits of each individual application.

(g) In those cases where it is determined that a fee shall be charged, the applicant will be advised to deposit the amount of the lawful charge for the copy desired. The amount of such charge will be determined in accordance with the schedule of fees prescribed in paragraph (i) of this section. The desired copy will not be delivered, except under court subpoena, until the full amount of the lawful charge is deposited. Any excess deposit of \$1 or more over the lawful charge will be returned to the applicant. Excess deposits of less than \$1 will be returned upon request. When a deposit is received with an application, such a deposit will be returned to the applicant should the application be denied.

(h) Copies of reports or records received from other Government departments or agencies will not be furnished except as provided in §1.513.

(i) *Fees to be charged.*

(1) *Schedule of fees:*

| Activity   | Fees  |
|--|---|
| (i) Duplication of document by any type of reproduction process to produce plain one-sided paper copies of a standard size (8½"×11"; 8½"×14"; 11"×14").  | \$0.15 per page after first 100 one-sided pages.  |
| (ii) Duplication of non-paper records, such as microforms, audiovisual materials (motion pictures, slides, laser optical disks, video tapes, audiotapes, etc.) computer tapes and disks, diskettes for personal computers, and any other automated media output. | Actual direct cost to the Agency as defined in §1.555(a)(2) of this part to the extent that it pertains to the cost of duplication. |
| (iii) Duplication of documents by any type of reproduction process not covered by paragraphs (i)(1) (i) and (ii) of this section to produce a copy in a form reasonably usable by a requester.   | Actual direct cost to the Agency as defined in §1.555(a)(2) of this part to the extent that it pertains to the cost of duplication. |



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| Activity   | Fees  |
|--|---|
| (iv) Providing special information, statistics, reports, drawings, specifications, lists of names and addresses (either in paper or machine readable form), computer or other machine readable output. | Actual cost to the Agency including computer and manual search costs, copying costs, labor, and material and overhead expenses. |
| (v) Attestation under the seal of the Agency .....   | \$3.00 per document so certified.   |
| (vi) Providing abstracts or copies of medical and dental records to insurance companies for other than litigation purposes.  | \$10.00 per request.  |
| (vii) Providing files under court subpoena .....   | Actual direct cost to the Agency.   |

(NOTE. If VA regularly contracts for duplicating services related to providing the requested records, such as the duplication of microfilm or architect's plans and drawings, the contractor fees may be included in the actual direct cost to the Agency)

(2) *Benefit records.* When VA benefit records are requested by a VA beneficiary or applicant for VA benefits, the duplication fee for one complete set of such records will be waived.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5702(b))

(j) If the copy is to be transmitted by certified or registered mail, airmail, or special delivery mail, the postal fees therefor shall be added to the other fees provided in paragraph (i) of this section (or the order must include postage stamps or stamped return envelopes for the purpose).

(k) Those Department of Veterans Affairs installations not having copying equipment are authorized to arrange with the nearest Department of Veterans Affairs installation having such equipment to make the necessary authorized copies of records or documents.

(l) Administration, staff office, and field facility heads are authorized to designate employees to certify copies of records and papers furnished under the provisions of paragraph (a) of this section.

[19 FR 3224, June 2, 1954, as amended at 32 FR 10850, July 25, 1967; 33 FR 9342, June 26, 1968; 35 FR 20001, Dec. 31, 1970; 37 FR 2676, Feb. 4, 1972; 39 FR 3938, Jan. 31, 1974; 53 FR 10376, Mar. 31, 1988; 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

**§ 1.527 Administrative review.**

(a) Any person may, in the event of a denial of his or her request to inspect or obtain information from or copies of records within the purview of §§1.501 through 1.526, appeal such denial. Such appeal, stating the circumstances of the denial, should be addressed, as appropriate, to the field facility, administration, or staff office head.

(b) A denial action not reversed by a field facility, administration, or staff office head on appeal, will be referred through normal channels to the General Counsel.

(c) The final agency decision in such appeals will be made by the General Counsel or the Deputy General Counsel.

[32 FR 10850, July 25, 1967, as amended at 55 FR 21546, May 25, 1990]

**RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RECORDS OTHER THAN CLAIMANT RECORDS**

NOTE: Sections 1.550 through 1.559 concern the availability and release of information from files, records, reports, and other papers and documents in Department of Veterans Affairs custody other than those pertaining to claims under any of the laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As to the release of information from Department of Veterans Affairs claimant records, see §§1.500 through 1.527. Section 1.550 series implement the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552.

[40 FR 12656, Mar. 20, 1975]

AUTHORITY: Sections 1.550 to 1.559 issued under 72 Stat. 1114; 38 U.S.C. 501.

**§ 1.550 General.**

The Department of Veterans Affairs policy is one of disclosure of information from agency records to the extent permitted by law. This includes the release of information which the Department of Veterans Affairs is authorized to withhold under 5 U.S.C. 552(b) (see §1.554) if it is determined: (a) By the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Deputy Secretary that disclosure of such information will serve a useful purpose or (b) by an administration, staff office, or field facility head or designee under §1.556(a) that disclosure