

of the United States shall conduct a study of the effectiveness of the amendments made by this section [enacting this section] and shall submit a report on such study to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs and Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Veterans' Affairs and Finance of the Senate not later than January 1, 1992."

§ 5317A. Use of income information from other agencies: independent verification required before termination or reduction of certain benefits and services

(a) INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary may terminate, deny, suspend, or reduce any benefit or service specified in section 5317(c), with respect to an individual under age 65 who is an applicant for or recipient of such a benefit or service, by reason of information obtained from the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 453(j)(11) of the Social Security Act, only if the Secretary takes appropriate steps to verify independently information relating to the individual's employment and income from employment.

(b) OPPORTUNITY TO CONTEST FINDINGS.—The Secretary shall inform each individual for whom the Secretary terminates, denies, suspends, or reduces any benefit or service under subsection (a) of the findings made by the Secretary under such subsection on the basis of verified information and shall provide to the individual an opportunity to contest such findings in the same manner as applies to other information and findings relating to eligibility for the benefit or service involved.

(c) SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR REIMBURSEMENT TO SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.—The Secretary shall pay the expense of reimbursing the Secretary of Health and Human Services in accordance with section 453(j)(11)(E) of the Social Security Act, for the cost incurred by the Secretary of Health and Human Services in furnishing information requested by the Secretary under section 453(j)(11) of such Act, from amounts available to the Department for the payment of compensation and pensions.

(d) EXPIRATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority under this section shall be in effect as follows:

(1) During the period beginning on December 26, 2007, and ending on November 18, 2011.

(2) During the period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2013 and ending 180 days after that date.

(Added Pub. L. 110-157, title III, § 301(b)(1), Dec. 26, 2007, 121 Stat. 1835; amended Pub. L. 112-37, § 17(a), Oct. 5, 2011, 125 Stat. 398; Pub. L. 113-37, § 3(b), Sept. 30, 2013, 127 Stat. 525.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 453 of the Social Security Act, referred to in subssecs. (a) and (c), is classified to section 653 of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare.

The date of the enactment of the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2013, referred to in subsec. (d)(2), is the date of enactment of Pub. L. 113-37, which was approved Sept. 30, 2013.

AMENDMENTS

2013—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 113-37 added subsec. (d) and struck out former subsec. (d). Prior to amendment, text

read as follows: "The authority under this section shall expire on November 18, 2011."

2011—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 112-37 substituted "November 18, 2011" for "September 30, 2011".

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2013 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 113-37 effective Oct. 1, 2013, see section 4(a) of Pub. L. 113-37, set out as a note under section 322 of this title.

§ 5318. Review of Social Security Administration death information

(a) The Secretary shall periodically compare Department of Veterans Affairs information regarding persons to or for whom compensation or pension is being paid with information in the records of the Social Security Administration relating to persons who have died for the purposes of—

(1) determining whether any such persons to whom compensation and pension is being paid are deceased;

(2) ensuring that such payments to or for any such persons who are deceased are terminated in a timely manner; and

(3) ensuring that collection of overpayments of such benefits resulting from payments after the death of such persons is initiated in a timely manner.

(b) The Social Security Administration death information referred to in subsection (a) of this section is death information available to the Secretary from or through the Commissioner of Social Security, including death information available to the Commissioner from a State, pursuant to a memorandum of understanding entered into by the Secretary and the Commissioner. Any such memorandum of understanding shall include safeguards to assure that information made available under it is not used for unauthorized purposes or improperly disclosed.

(Added Pub. L. 101-508, title VIII, § 8053(b)(1), Nov. 5, 1990, 104 Stat. 1388-352, § 3118; renumbered § 5318, Pub. L. 102-40, title IV, § 402(b)(1), May 7, 1991, 105 Stat. 238; Pub. L. 108-183, title VII, § 708(c)(4)(A), (B)(i), Dec. 16, 2003, 117 Stat. 2674.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2003—Pub. L. 108-183, § 708(c)(4)(B)(i), substituted "Social Security Administration" for "Department of Health and Human Services" in section catchline.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 108-183, § 708(c)(4)(A)(i), substituted "Social Security Administration" for "Department of Health and Human Services" in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 108-183, § 708(c)(4)(A)(ii), substituted "Social Security Administration" for "Department of Health and Human Services", "Commissioner of Social Security" for "Secretary of Health and Human Services" after "through the", "Commissioner" for "Secretary of Health and Human Services" after "available to the", and "the Secretary and the Commissioner" for "such Secretaries".

1991—Pub. L. 102-40 renumbered section 3118 of this title as this section.

§ 5319. Limitations on access to financial records

(a) The Secretary may make a request referred to in section 1113(p) of the Right to Financial

Privacy Act of 1978 (12 U.S.C. 3413(p)) only if the Secretary determines that the requested information—

(1) is necessary in order for the Secretary to administer the provisions of law referred to in that section; and

(2) cannot be secured by a reasonable search of records and information of the Department.

(b) The Secretary shall include a certification of the determinations referred to in subsection (a) in each request presented to a financial institution.

(c) Information disclosed pursuant to a request referred to in subsection (a) may be used solely for the purpose of the administration of benefits programs under laws administered by the Secretary if, except for the exemption in subsection (a), the disclosure of that information would otherwise be prohibited by any provision of the Right to Financial Privacy Act of 1978.

(Added Pub. L. 102-568, title VI, §603(b)(1), Oct. 29, 1992, 106 Stat. 4342.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Right to Financial Privacy Act of 1978, referred to in subsec. (c), is title XI of Pub. L. 95-630, Nov. 10, 1978, 92 Stat. 3697, which is classified generally to chapter 35 (§3401 et seq.) of Title 12, Banks and Banking. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 3401 of Title 12 and Tables.

§ 5320. Threshold for reporting debts to consumer reporting agencies

The Secretary shall prescribe regulations that establish the minimum amount of a claim or debt, arising from a benefit administered by the Under Secretary for Benefits or Under Secretary for Health, that the Secretary will report to a consumer reporting agency under section 3711 of title 31.

(Added Pub. L. 116-315, title II, §2007(a), Jan. 5, 2021, 134 Stat. 4977.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

DEADLINE

Pub. L. 116-315, title II, §2007(c), Jan. 5, 2021, 134 Stat. 4977, provided that: “The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall prescribe regulations under section 5320 of such title [title 38], as added by subsection (a), not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [Jan. 5, 2021].”

§ 5321. Benefits helpline

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall maintain a toll-free telephone helpline that a covered individual may call in order to—

(1) obtain information about any service or benefit provided under the laws administered by the Secretary; or

(2) be directed to an appropriate office of the Department regarding such a service or benefit.

(b) CONTRACT FOR DIRECTION OF CALLS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may enter into a contract with a third party to direct calls made to the

helpline to an appropriate office under subsection (a)(2).

(c) LIVE INDIVIDUAL REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall ensure that a covered individual who calls the helpline has the option to speak with a live individual.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term “covered individual” means—

(A) a veteran;

(B) an individual acting on behalf of a veteran; or

(C) an individual other than a veteran who is eligible to receive a benefit or service under a law administered by the Secretary.

(2) The term “veteran” has the meaning given such term in section 2002(b) of this title.

(Added Pub. L. 118-159, div. E, title L, §5002(a), Dec. 23, 2024, 138 Stat. 2408.)

CHAPTER 55—MINORS, INCOMPETENTS, AND OTHER WARDS

Sec.

- 5501. Commitment actions.
- 5501A. Beneficiaries' rights in mental competence determinations.
- 5502. Payments to and supervision of fiduciaries.
- 5503. Hospitalized veterans and estates of incompetent institutionalized veterans.
- 5504. Administration of trust funds.
- [5505. Repealed.]
- 5506. Definition of “fiduciary”.
- 5507. Inquiry, investigations, and qualification of fiduciaries.
- 5508. Periodic onsite reviews of institutional fiduciaries.
- 5509. Authority to require fiduciary to receive payments at regional offices of the Department when failing to provide required accounting.
- 5510. Annual report.

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

Pub. L. 115-407, title VII, §702(a)(1), Dec. 31, 2018, 132 Stat. 5381, inserted period at end of item 5501A.

2016—Pub. L. 114-255, div. B, title XIV, §14017(b), Dec. 13, 2016, 130 Stat. 1307, added item 5501A.

2004—Pub. L. 108-454, title V, §§501(a)(2), 502(b), 504(a)(2), 505(b), Dec. 10, 2004, 118 Stat. 3617, 3619, 3621, 3622, added items 5506 to 5510.

1994—Pub. L. 103-446, title XII, §1201(g)(4)(B), Nov. 2, 1994, 108 Stat. 4687, struck out item 5505 “Limitation on compensation payments for certain incompetent veterans”.

1991—Pub. L. 102-40, title IV, §402(c)(1), May 7, 1991, 105 Stat. 239, renumbered items 3201 to 3205 as 5501 to 5505, respectively.

1990—Pub. L. 101-508, title VIII, §8001(a)(2), Nov. 5, 1990, 104 Stat. 1388-342, added item 3205.

1984—Pub. L. 98-223, title II, §207(b)(2), Mar. 2, 1984, 98 Stat. 43, substituted “fiduciaries” for “guardians” in item 3202.

§ 5501. Commitment actions

The Secretary may incur necessary court costs and other expenses incident to proceedings for the commitment of mentally incompetent veterans to a Department hospital or domiciliary when necessary for treatment or domiciliary purposes.

(Pub. L. 85-857, Sept. 2, 1958, 72 Stat. 1232, §3201; renumbered §5501, Pub. L. 102-40, title IV,