

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,

§ 402(b)(1), May 7, 1991, 105 Stat. 238; amended Pub. L. 102-83, § 4(a)(3), (4), (b)(1), (2)(E), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 404, 405.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

1991—Pub. L. 102-40 renumbered section 3201 of this title as this section.

Pub. L. 102-83, § 4(b)(1), (2)(E), substituted “Secretary” for “Administrator”.

Pub. L. 102-83, § 4(a)(3), (4), substituted “Department” for “Veterans’ Administration”.

§ 5501A. Beneficiaries’ rights in mental competence determinations

The Secretary may not make an adverse determination concerning the mental capacity of a beneficiary to manage monetary benefits paid to or for the beneficiary by the Secretary under this title unless such beneficiary has been provided all of the following, subject to the procedures and timelines prescribed by the Secretary for determinations of incompetency:

(1) Notice of the proposed adverse determination and the supporting evidence.

(2) An opportunity to request a hearing.

(3) An opportunity to present evidence, including an opinion from a medical professional or other person, on the capacity of the beneficiary to manage monetary benefits paid to or for the beneficiary by the Secretary under this title.

(4) An opportunity to be represented at no expense to the Government (including by counsel) at any such hearing and to bring a medical professional or other person to provide relevant testimony at any such hearing.

(Added Pub. L. 114-255, div. B, title XIV, § 14017(a), Dec. 13, 2016, 130 Stat. 1307.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 114-255, div. B, title XIV, § 14017(c), Dec. 13, 2016, 130 Stat. 1307, provided that: “Section 5501A of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply to determinations made by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on or after the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 13, 2016].”

§ 5502. Payments to and supervision of fiduciaries

(a)(1) Where it appears to the Secretary that the interest of the beneficiary would be served thereby, payment of benefits under any law administered by the Secretary may be made directly to the beneficiary or to a relative or some other fiduciary for the use and benefit of the beneficiary, regardless of any legal disability on the part of the beneficiary. Where, in the opinion of the Secretary, any fiduciary receiving funds on behalf of a Department beneficiary is acting in such a number of cases as to make it impracticable to conserve properly the estates or to supervise the persons of the beneficiaries, the Secretary may refuse to make future payments in such cases as the Secretary may deem proper.

(2) In a case in which the Secretary determines that a commission is necessary in order

to obtain the services of a fiduciary in the best interests of a beneficiary, the Secretary may authorize a fiduciary appointed by the Secretary to obtain from the beneficiary’s estate a reasonable commission for fiduciary services rendered, but the commission for any year may not exceed 4 percent of the monetary benefits under laws administered by the Secretary paid on behalf of the beneficiary to the fiduciary during such year. A commission may not be authorized for a fiduciary who receives any other form of remuneration or payment in connection with rendering fiduciary services for benefits under this title on behalf of the beneficiary.

(b) Whenever it appears that any fiduciary, in the opinion of the Secretary, is not properly executing or has not properly executed the duties of the trust of such fiduciary or has collected or paid, or is attempting to collect or pay, fees, commissions, or allowances that are inequitable or in excess of those allowed by law for the duties performed or expenses incurred, or has failed to make such payments as may be necessary for the benefit of the ward or the dependents of the ward, then the Secretary may appear, by the Secretary’s authorized attorney, in the court which has appointed such fiduciary, or in any court having original, concurrent, or appellate jurisdiction over said cause, and make proper presentation of such matters. The Secretary, in the Secretary’s discretion, may suspend payments to any such fiduciary who shall neglect or refuse, after reasonable notice, to render an account to the Secretary from time to time showing the application of such payments for the benefit of such incompetent or minor beneficiary, or who shall neglect or refuse to administer the estate according to law. The Secretary may require the fiduciary, as part of such account, to disclose any additional financial information concerning the beneficiary (except for information that is not available to the fiduciary). The Secretary may appear or intervene by the Secretary’s duly authorized attorney in any court as an interested party in any litigation instituted by the Secretary or otherwise, directly affecting money paid to such fiduciary under this section.

(c) Authority is hereby granted for the payment of any court or other expenses incident to any investigation or court proceeding for the appointment of any fiduciary or other person for the purpose of payment of benefits payable under laws administered by the Secretary or the removal of such fiduciary and appointment of another, and of expenses in connection with the administration of such benefits by such fiduciaries, or in connection with any other court proceeding hereby authorized, when such payment is authorized by the Secretary.

(d) All or any part of any benefits the payment of which is suspended or withheld under this section may, in the discretion of the Secretary, be paid temporarily to the person having custody and control of the incompetent or minor beneficiary, to be used solely for the benefit of such beneficiary, or, in the case of an incompetent veteran, may be apportioned to the dependent or dependents, if any, of such veteran. Any part not so paid and any funds of a mentally incompetent or insane veteran not paid to the chief officer of