

XVIII, and XIX of the Social Security Act are classified generally to subchapters XVI (§1381 et seq.), XVIII (§1395 et seq.), and XIX (§1396 et seq.) of chapter 7 of this title, respectively. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 1305 of this title and Tables.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

SHORT TITLE

Pub. L. 96-247, §1, May 23, 1980, 94 Stat. 349, provided: “That this Act [enacting this subchapter] may be cited as the ‘Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act’.”

§ 1997a. Initiation of civil actions

(a) Discretionary authority of Attorney General; preconditions

Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that any State or political subdivision of a State, official, employee, or agent thereof, or other person acting on behalf of a State or political subdivision of a State is subjecting persons residing in or confined to an institution, as defined in section 1997 of this title, to egregious or flagrant conditions which deprive such persons of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States causing such persons to suffer grievous harm, and that such deprivation is pursuant to a pattern or practice of resistance to the full enjoyment of such rights, privileges, or immunities, the Attorney General, for or in the name of the United States, may institute a civil action in any appropriate United States district court against such party for such equitable relief as may be appropriate to insure the minimum corrective measures necessary to insure the full enjoyment of such rights, privileges, or immunities, except that such equitable relief shall be available under this subchapter to persons residing in or confined to an institution as defined in section 1997(1)(B)(ii) of this title only insofar as such persons are subjected to conditions which deprive them of rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution of the United States.

(b) Discretionary award of attorney fees

In any action commenced under this section, the court may allow the prevailing party, other than the United States, a reasonable attorney’s fee against the United States as part of the costs.

(c) Attorney General to personally sign complaint

The Attorney General shall personally sign any complaint filed pursuant to this section.

(Pub. L. 96-247, §3, May 23, 1980, 94 Stat. 350; Pub. L. 104-134, title I, §101[(a)] [title VIII, §803(a)], Apr. 26, 1996, 110 Stat. 1321, 1321–70; renumbered title I, Pub. L. 104-140, §1(a), May 2, 1996, 110 Stat. 1327.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

1996—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 104-134 amended subsec. (c) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (c) read as follows: “Any complaint filed by the Attorney General pursuant to this section shall be personally signed by him.”

§ 1997a-1. Subpoena authority

(a) Authority

The Attorney General, or at the direction of the Attorney General, any officer or employee of the Department of Justice may require by subpoena access to any institution that is the subject of an investigation under this subchapter and to any document, record, material, file, report, memorandum, policy, procedure, investigation, video or audio recording, or quality assurance report relating to any institution that is the subject of an investigation under this subchapter to determine whether there are conditions which deprive persons residing in or confined to the institution of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States.

(b) Issuance and enforcement of subpoenas

(1) Issuance

Subpoenas issued under this section—

(A) shall bear the signature of the Attorney General or any officer or employee of the Department of Justice as designated by the Attorney General; and

(B) shall be served by any person or class of persons designated by the Attorney General or a designated officer or employee for that purpose.

(2) Enforcement

In the case of contumacy or failure to obey a subpoena issued under this section, the United States district court for the judicial district in which the institution is located may issue an order requiring compliance. Any failure to obey the order of the court may be punished by the court as a contempt that¹ court.

(c) Protection of subpoenaed records and information

Any document, record, material, file, report, memorandum, policy, procedure, investigation, video or audio recording, or quality assurance report or other information obtained under a subpoena issued under this section—

(1) may not be used for any purpose other than to protect the rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States of persons who reside, have resided, or will reside in an institution;

(2) may not be transmitted by or within the Department of Justice for any purpose other than to protect the rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States of persons who reside, have resided, or will reside in an institution; and

(3) shall be redacted, obscured, or otherwise altered if used in any publicly available manner so as to prevent the disclosure of any personally identifiable information.

(Pub. L. 96-247, §3A, as added Pub. L. 111-148, title X, §10606(d)(2), Mar. 23, 2010, 124 Stat. 1008.)

¹ So in original. Probably should be preceded by “of”.

§ 1997b. Certification requirements; Attorney General to personally sign certification

(a) At the time of the commencement of an action under section 1997a of this title the Attorney General shall certify to the court—

(1) that at least 49 calendar days previously the Attorney General has notified in writing the Governor or chief executive officer and attorney general or chief legal officer of the appropriate State or political subdivision and the director of the institution of—

(A) the alleged conditions which deprive rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States and the alleged pattern or practice of resistance to the full enjoyment of such rights, privileges, or immunities;

(B) the supporting facts giving rise to the alleged conditions and the alleged pattern or practice, including the dates or time period during which the alleged conditions and pattern or practice of resistance occurred; and when feasible, the identity of all persons reasonably suspected of being involved in causing the alleged conditions and pattern or practice at the time of the certification, and the date on which the alleged conditions and pattern or practice were first brought to the attention of the Attorney General; and

(C) the minimum measures which the Attorney General believes may remedy the alleged conditions and the alleged pattern or practice of resistance;

(2) that the Attorney General has notified in writing the Governor or chief executive officer and attorney general or chief legal officer of the appropriate State or political subdivision and the director of the institution of the Attorney General's intention to commence an investigation of such institution, that such notice was delivered at least seven days prior to the commencement of such investigation and that between the time of such notice and the commencement of an action under section 1997a of this title—

(A) the Attorney General has made a reasonable good faith effort to consult with the Governor or chief executive officer and attorney general or chief legal officer of the appropriate State or political subdivision and the director of the institution, or their designees, regarding financial, technical, or other assistance which may be available from the United States and which the Attorney General believes may assist in the correction of such conditions and pattern or practice of resistance;

(B) the Attorney General has encouraged the appropriate officials to correct the alleged conditions and pattern or practice of resistance through informal methods of conference, conciliation and persuasion, including, to the extent feasible, discussion of the possible costs and fiscal impacts of alternative minimum corrective measures, and it is the Attorney General's opinion that reasonable efforts at voluntary correction have not succeeded; and

(C) the Attorney General is satisfied that the appropriate officials have had a reason-

able time to take appropriate action to correct such conditions and pattern or practice, taking into consideration the time required to remodel or make necessary changes in physical facilities or relocate residents, reasonable legal or procedural requirements, the urgency of the need to correct such conditions, and other circumstances involved in correcting such conditions; and

(3) that the Attorney General believes that such an action by the United States is of general public importance and will materially further the vindication of rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States.

(b) The Attorney General shall personally sign any certification made pursuant to this section.

(Pub. L. 96-247, § 4, May 23, 1980, 94 Stat. 350; Pub. L. 97-256, title II, § 201(a), Sept. 8, 1982, 96 Stat. 816; Pub. L. 104-134, title I, § 101[(a)] [title VIII, § 803(b)], Apr. 26, 1996, 110 Stat. 1321, 1321-71; renumbered title I, Pub. L. 104-140, § 1(a), May 2, 1996, 110 Stat. 1327.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

1996—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 104-134, § 101[(a)] [title VIII, § 803(b)(1)(A)], substituted “the Attorney General” for “he” in introductory provisions and in subpar. (C).

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 104-134, § 101[(a)] [title VIII, § 803(b)(1)(A)], substituted “the Attorney General” for “he” wherever appearing in introductory provisions and in subpars. (A) to (C).

Pub. L. 104-134, § 101[(a)] [title VIII, § 803(b)(1)(B)], substituted “the Attorney General’s” for “his” in introductory provisions and in subpar. (B).

Subsec. (a)(3). Pub. L. 104-134, § 101[(a)] [title VIII, § 803(b)(1)(A)], substituted “the Attorney General” for “he”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 104-134, § 101[(a)] [title VIII, § 803(b)(2)], amended subsec. (b) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (b) read as follows: “Any certification made by the Attorney General pursuant to this section shall be personally signed by him.”

1982—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 97-256 substituted “section 1997a of this title” for “section 1997 of this title” in provisions preceding par. (1).

§ 1997c. Intervention in actions

(a) Discretionary authority of Attorney General; preconditions; time period

(1) Whenever an action has been commenced in any court of the United States seeking relief from egregious or flagrant conditions which deprive persons residing in institutions of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States causing them to suffer grievous harm and the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that such deprivation is pursuant to a pattern or practice of resistance to the full enjoyment of such rights, privileges, or immunities, the Attorney General, for or in the name of the United States, may intervene in such action upon motion by the Attorney General.

(2) The Attorney General shall not file a motion to intervene under paragraph (1) before 90 days after the commencement of the action, except that if the court determines it would be in the interests of justice, the court may shorten or waive the time period.