

governments, and non-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Responses: 4,104,771.

Estimated Time Per Response: 19 min.

Estimated Total Annual Burden

Hours: 1,272,479.

The following paragraph applies to all of the collections of information covered by this notice:

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a valid OMB control number. Books or records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

Request for Comments: Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information.

Approved: June 6, 2002.

Glenn Kirkland,

IRS Reports Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 02-15354 Filed 6-17-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4830-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Internal Revenue Service

Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program Availability of Application Packages

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Availability of tax counseling for the elderly (TCE) application packages.

SUMMARY: This document provides notice of the availability of Application

Packages for the 2003 Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program.

DATES: Application Packages are available from the IRS at this time. The deadline for submitting an application package to the IRS for the 2003 Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program is August 10, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Application Packages may be requested by contacting: Internal Revenue Service, 5000 Ellin Road, Lanham, MD, 20706, Attention: Program Manager, Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program, W:CAR:SPEC:FO:GA, Building C-7, Room 185.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mrs. Lynn Tyler, W:CAR:SPEC:FO:GA, Building C-7, Room 185, Internal Revenue Service, 5000 Ellin Road, Lanham, MD 20706. The non-toll-free telephone number is (202) 283-0189.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Authority for the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program is contained in Section 163 of the Revenue Act of 1978, Public Law 95-600, (92 Stat. 12810), November 6, 1978. Regulations were published in the **Federal Register** at 44 FR 72113 on December 13, 1979. Section 163 gives the IRS authority to enter into cooperative agreements with private or public non-profit agencies or organizations to establish a network of trained volunteers to provide free tax information and return preparation assistance to elderly individuals. Elderly individuals are defined as individuals age 60 and over at the close of their taxable year.

Cooperative agreements will be entered into based upon competition among eligible agencies and organizations. Because applications are being solicited before the FY 2003 budget has been approved, cooperative agreements will be entered into subject to appropriation of funds. Once funded, sponsoring agencies and organizations will receive a grant from the IRS for administrative expenses and to reimburse volunteers for expenses incurred in training and in providing tax return assistance. The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program is referenced in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance in Section 21.006.

Dated: May 12, 2002.

Jim Grimes,

Director, Field Operations, Stakeholder Partnership, Education & Communication.

[FR Doc. 02-15109 Filed 6-17-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4830-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Privacy Act of 1974; System of Records

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

ACTION: Notice of establishment of new system of records.

SUMMARY: The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552(e) (4)) requires that all agencies publish in the **Federal Register** a notice of the existence and character of their systems of records. Notice is hereby given that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is establishing a new system of records entitled "The Revenue Program—Billing and Collections Records—VA" (114VA17).

DATES: Comments on this new system of records must be received no later than July 18, 2002. If no public comment is received, the new system will become effective July 18, 2002.

ADDRESSES: You may mail or hand-deliver written comments concerning the proposed new system of records to the Office of Regulations Management (02D), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420; or fax comments to (202) 273-9289; or email comments to "OGCRegulations@mail.va.gov". All relevant material received before July 18, 2002 will be considered. Comments will be available for public inspection at the above address in the Office of Regulations Management, Room 1158, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Privacy Act Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420, telephone (727) 320-1839.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Description of the Proposed Systems of Records

In 1986, Pub. L. 99-272, Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, enacted April 7, 1986, established the means test program and gave VA the authority to seek reimbursement from third party health insurance carriers for care provided to nonservice-connected veterans. Pub. L. 101-508, Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, enacted November 5, 1990, established per diem copayments, prescription copayments and gave VA the authority to seek reimbursement from third party health insurance carriers for care provided to service-connected veterans

for their nonservice-connected conditions. The Integrated Billing software in VistA located at each VA health care facility is an automated integrated billing system used to process billing of, and collections from, third party health insurance carriers for medical care or services received by a veteran for a nonservice-connected condition. The VA health care facilities are able to submit claims to third parties either electronically (EDI) or via paper. The use of electronic claims processing increases the efficiency of third party billing. In order to electronically submit claims, the third parties (health insurance carriers) require enrollment of health care providers from each VA health care facility. This enrollment process enables the third party payers to set up electronic databases to recognize claims from a specific VA health care facility, and to grant permission to the VA's health care clearinghouse to submit claims to a third party payer on behalf of each VA health care facility. The records and information in the system are also used for the billing of, and collections from, other Federal agencies for medical care or services received by an eligible beneficiary. The billing and collections for first party (veterans required to make copayments based on eligibility) is located at the VA Austin Automation Center (AAC), Austin, Texas. The Integrated Billing software in VistA at each VA health care facility creates a first party (veteran required to make copayments based on eligibility) statement based on medical care or services provided to a veteran for a nonservice-connected condition. The Integrated Billing software in VistA then transmits the first party statements to the AAC for printing and mailing to the veteran.

The purpose of this Billing and Collections system of records is to compile all relative information in order to: (1) Bill to or collect from third parties (insurance carriers) for medical care or services received by a veteran for a nonservice-connected condition; (2) bill to or collect from other Federal agencies for medical care or services received by an eligible beneficiary; (3) bill to or collect from a veteran required to make copayments based on eligibility (first party) for medical care or services received by a veteran for a nonservice-connected condition; (4) identify and/or verify insurance coverage of a veteran or veteran's spouse prior to submitting claims for medical care or services; (5) submit appeals to third party for non-reimbursement of claims for medical care or services provided to a veteran; (6) enroll health care providers, utilizing

the Provider Healthcare Ongoing EDI Billing Enrollment software (PHOEBE), with third party health plans and VA's health care clearinghouse in order to electronically file claims for medical care or services; and (7) report analytical and statistical data related to management practices, reimbursement practices of insurance carriers, and billing and collection data. The information in this system of records may be retrieved by patient name, social security number or other assigned identifier as well as by provider name, social security number or other assigned identifier.

The information used for billing and collections was previously covered under the "Patient Medical Record-VA" (24VA136) system of records. We are establishing a new system of records to incorporate changes necessary for electronic billing and data exchange and to consolidate all billing and collections references into one system of records. This will provide one source of reference and will permit administrative ease when revisions or updates are required.

II. Proposed Routine Use Disclosures of Data in the System

We are proposing to establish the following routine use disclosures for information which will be maintained in the system:

To the extent that records contained in the system include information protected by 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, *i.e.*, individually identifiable health information, and 38 U.S.C. 7332; *i.e.*, medical treatment information related to drug abuse, alcoholism or alcohol abuse, sickle cell anemia or infection with the human immunodeficiency virus, that information cannot be disclosed under a routine use unless there is also specific statutory authority in 38 U.S.C. 7332 and regulatory authority in 45 CFR parts 160 and 164 permitting disclosure.

1. On its own initiative, VA may disclose information, except for the names and home address of veterans and their dependents, to a Federal, State, local, tribal or foreign agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto. On its own initiative, VA may also disclose the names and addresses of veterans and their dependents to a Federal agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute,

regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto.

2. Disclosure may be made to an agency in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch, or the District of Columbia's government in response to its request or at the initiation of VA, in connection with the letting of a contract, other benefits by the requesting agency, or the lawful statutory, administrative, or investigative purpose of the agency to the extent that the information is relevant and necessary to the requesting agency's decision. However, names and addresses of veterans and their dependents will be released only to Federal entities.

3. Disclosure may be made to a Congressional office from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from the Congressional office made at the request of that individual.

Individuals sometimes request the help of a member of Congress in resolving some issue relating to a matter before VA. The member of Congress then writes VA, and VA must be able to give sufficient information to be responsive to the inquiry.

4. Disclosure may be made to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in records management inspections conducted under authority of Title 44 U.S.C.

NARA is responsible for archiving old records no longer actively used, but which may be appropriate for preservation; they are responsible in general for the physical maintenance of the Federal government's records. VA must be able to turn records over to these agencies in order to determine the proper disposition of such records.

5. Disclosure may be made to the Department of Justice and United States attorneys in defense or prosecution of litigation involving the United States, and to Federal agencies upon their request in connection with review of administrative tort claims filed under the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. 2672.

6. Any information in this system of records, including personal information obtained from other Federal agencies through computer matching programs, may be disclosed for the purposes identified below to any third party, except consumer reporting agencies, in connection with any proceeding for the collection of an amount owed to the United States by virtue of a person's participation in any benefit program administered by VA. Information may be disclosed under this routine use only to the extent that it is reasonably necessary for the following purposes: (a) To assist VA in collection of title 38 overpayments, overdue indebtedness,

and/or costs of services provided individuals not entitled to such services; and (b) to initiate civil or criminal legal actions for collecting amounts owed to the United States and/or for prosecuting individuals who willfully or fraudulently obtain title 38 benefits without entitlement. This disclosure is consistent with 38 U.S.C. 5701(b)(6).

7. The name and address of a veteran, other information as is reasonably necessary to identify such veteran, including personal information obtained from other Federal agencies through computer matching programs, and any information concerning the veteran's indebtedness to the United States by virtue of the person's participation in a benefits program administered by VA may be disclosed to a consumer reporting agency for purposes of assisting in the collection of such indebtedness, provided that the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5701(g)(4) have been met.

8. The name of a veteran, or other beneficiary, other information as is reasonably necessary to identify such individual, and any information concerning the individual's indebtedness by virtue of a person's participation in a medical care and treatment program administered by VA, may be disclosed to the Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service, for the collection of indebtedness arising from such program by the withholding of all or a portion of the person's Federal income tax refund. These records may be disclosed as part of a computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

The Debt Collection Act of 1982 provided the statutory authority for federal agencies to collect debt through administrative offset. The Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 expanded the statutory authority for The Treasury Offset Program (TOP) by requiring agencies to transfer delinquent non-tax debts over 180 days to the U.S. Treasury for the purpose of offsetting federal payments to collect delinquent debts owed the Federal government. VA must be able to disclose information as deemed necessary to accomplish this purpose.

9. Relevant information (excluding medical treatment information related to drug or alcohol abuse, infection with the human immunodeficiency virus or sickle cell anemia) may be disclosed to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the purpose of identifying improper duplicate payments made by Medicare fiscal intermediaries where VA authorized and was responsible for payment for

medical services obtained at non-VA health care facilities.

The purpose of the review is for HHS to identify duplicate payments and initiate recovery of identified overpayments and, where warranted, initiate fraud investigations, or, to seek reimbursement from VA for those services which were authorized by VA and for which no payment, or partial payment by VA was made. The information to be disclosed to HHS for those patients authorized by VA to obtain medical services from non-VA health care facilities includes patient identifying information to include name, address, social security number, and date of birth, and dates of admission and discharge, diagnostic, surgical and procedure codes, and state and county of residence and zip code. These records may also be disclosed as part of an ongoing computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

10. The social security number, universal personal identification number and other identifying information of a health care provider may be disclosed to a third party where the third party requires the agency to provide that information before it will pay for medical care provided by VA.

Third party (insurance carriers) payers often require identifying information of healthcare providers before reimbursing the VA for medical treatment or services rendered to a veteran. In these situations, VA must be able to disclose the required identifying information, usually in the form of social security number or universal personal identification number.

11. Relevant information may be disclosed to individuals, organizations, private or public agencies, etc., with whom VA has a contract or agreement to perform such services as VA may deem practical for the purposes of laws administered by VA, in order for the contractor to perform the services of the contract or agreement.

VA occasionally contracts out certain billing and collection functions when this would contribute to effective and efficient operations. VA must be able to give a contractor whatever information is necessary for the contractor to fulfill the services set forth in the contract or agreement. In these situations, safeguards are provided in the contract or agreement prohibiting the contractor from using or disclosing the information for any purpose other than that described in the contract or agreement.

12. Relevant information from this system of records may be disclosed to the National Practitioner Data Bank and/or State Licensing Board in the State(s) in which a practitioner is licensed, in

which the VA facility is located, and/or in which an act or omission occurred upon which a medical malpractice claim was based when VA reports information concerning: (a) Any payment for the benefit of a physician, dentist, or other licensed health care practitioner which was made as the result of a settlement or judgment of a claim of medical malpractice if an appropriate determination is made in accordance with agency policy that payment was related to substandard care, professional incompetence or professional misconduct on the part of the individual; (b) a final decision which relates to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct that adversely affects the clinical privileges of a physician or dentist for a period longer than 30 days; or, (c) the acceptance of the surrender of clinical privileges or any restriction of such privileges by a physician or dentist either while under investigation by the health care entity relating to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct, or in return for not conducting such an investigation or proceeding. These records may also be disclosed as part of a computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

13. Patient identifying information may be disclosed from this system of records to any third party (insurance carrier) or Federal agency such as the Department of Defense, Office of Personnel Management and Department of Health and Human Services and VA and government-wide third-party insurers responsible for payment of the cost of medical care for the identified patients in order for VA to seek recovery of the medical care costs. These records may also be disclosed as part of a computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

VA must be able to provide relevant information to a third party in order to seek reimbursement for the medical care or services provided. The VA also must be able to provide relevant information to Federal agencies when medical care and services have been provided to patients through Sharing Agreements.

14. Relevant information, including the nature and amount of a financial obligation, may be disclosed, in order to assist VA in the collection of unpaid financial obligations owed the VA, to a debtor's employing agency or commanding officer so that the debtor-employee may be counseled by his or her Federal employer or commanding officer. This purpose is consistent with 5 U.S.C. 5514, 4 CFR 102.5, and section 206 of Executive Order 11222 of May 8, 1965 (30 FR 6469).

III. Compatibility of the Proposed Routine Uses

The Privacy Act permits VA to disclose information about individuals without their consent for a routine use when the information will be used for a purpose that is compatible with the purpose for which we collected the information. In all of the routine use disclosures described above, the recipient of the information will use the information in connection with a matter relating to one of VA's programs, will use the information to provide a benefit to VA, or disclosure is required by law.

The notice of intent to publish and an advance copy of the system notice have been sent to the appropriate Congressional committees and to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as required by 5 U.S.C. 552a(r) (Privacy Act) and guidelines issued by OMB (65 FR 77677), December 12, 2000.

Approved: May 31, 2002.

Anthony J. Principi,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

114VA17

SYSTEM NAME:

The Revenue Program—Billing and Collections Records—VA.

SYSTEM LOCATION:

Records are maintained at each VA health care facility, (in most cases, back-up computer tape information is stored at off-site locations). Address locations for VA facilities are listed in VA Appendix 1 of the biennial publication of VA Privacy Act Issuances. In addition, information from these records or copies of records may be maintained at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 810 Vermont Ave. NW., Washington, DC; the VA Austin Automation Center (AAC), Austin, Texas; Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Offices; and the VA Allocation Resource Center (ARC), Boston, Massachusetts.

CATEGORIES OF INDIVIDUALS COVERED BY THE SYSTEM:

1. Veterans who have applied for health care services under Title 38, United States Code, Chapter 17, and in certain cases members of their immediate families.
2. Beneficiaries of other Federal agencies.
3. Individuals examined or treated under contract or resource sharing agreements.
4. Individuals examined or treated for research or donor purposes.
5. Individuals who have applied for title 38 benefits but who do not meet the

requirements under title 38 to receive such benefits.

6. Individuals who were provided medical care under emergency conditions for humanitarian reasons.

7. International Government responsible for pensioned members of allied forces (Allied Beneficiaries) who are provided health care services under Title 38, United States Code, Chapter 1.

8. Health care professionals providing examination or treatment to any individuals within VA health care facilities.

9. Health care professionals providing examination or treatment to individuals under contract or resource sharing agreements.

CATEGORIES OF RECORDS IN THE SYSTEM:

The records may include information related to:

1. The social security number and insurance policy number of the veteran and/or veteran's spouse. The record may include other identifying information (e.g., name, date of birth, age, sex, marital status) and address information (e.g., home and/or mailing address, home telephone number).
2. Insurance information specific to the veteran and/or spouse to include annual deductibles and benefits.
3. Diagnostic codes (ICD9—CM, CPT—4, and any other coding system) pertaining to the individual's medical, surgical, psychiatric, dental and/or psychological examination or treatment.
4. Charges claimed to an insurance company based on treatment/services provided to the patient.
5. Charges billed to those veterans who are required to meet copayment obligations for treatment/services rendered by the VA.
6. The name, social security number and/or universal personal identification number of health care providers.

AUTHORITY FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE SYSTEM:

Title 38, United States Code, sections 1710 and 1729.

PURPOSE(S):

The records and information are used for the billing of, and collections from, a third party (insurance carriers) or other Federal agencies for medical care or services received by a veteran for a nonservice-connected condition or from a first party, veteran required to make copayments. The records and information are also used for the billing of and collections from other Federal agencies for medical care or services received by an eligible beneficiary. The data may be used to identify and/or verify insurance coverage of a veteran or veteran's spouse prior to submitting

claims for medical care or services. The data may be used to support appeals for non-reimbursement of claims for medical care or services provided to a veteran. The data may be used to enroll health care providers with health plans and VA's health care clearinghouse in order to electronically file third party claims. The records and information may be used for statistical analyses to produce various management, tracking and follow-up reports, to track and trend the reimbursement practices of insurance carriers, and to track billing and collection information.

ROUTINE USES OF RECORDS MAINTAINED IN THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING CATEGORIES OF USERS AND THE PURPOSES OF SUCH USES:

To the extent that records contained in the system include information protected by 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, *i.e.*, individually identifiable health information, and 38 U.S.C. 7332; *i.e.*, medical treatment information related to drug abuse, alcoholism or alcohol abuse, sickle cell anemia or infection with the human immunodeficiency virus, that information cannot be disclosed under a routine use unless there is also specific statutory authority in 38 U.S.C. 7332 and regulatory authority in 45 CFR parts 160 and 164 permitting disclosure.

1. On its own initiative, VA may disclose information, except for the names and home address of veterans and their dependents, to a Federal, State, local, tribal or foreign agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto. On its own initiative, VA may also disclose the names and addresses of veterans and their dependents to a Federal agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto.

2. Disclosure may be made to an agency in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch, or the District of Columbia's government in response to its request or at the initiation of VA, in connection with the letting of a contract, other benefits by the requesting agency, or the lawful statutory, administrative, or investigative purpose of the agency to the extent that the information is relevant and necessary to the requesting agency's decision. However, names and addresses of veterans and their dependents will be released only to Federal entities.

3. Disclosure may be made to a Congressional office from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from the Congressional office made at the request of that individual.

4. Disclosure may be made to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in records management inspections conducted under authority of Title 44 U.S.C.

5. Disclosure may be made to the Department of Justice and United States attorneys in defense or prosecution of litigation involving the United States, and to Federal agencies upon their request in connection with review of administrative tort claims filed under the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. 2672.

6. Any information in this system of records, including personal information obtained from other Federal agencies through computer-matching programs, may be disclosed for the purposes identified below to any third party, except consumer reporting agencies, in connection with any proceeding for the collection of an amount owed to the United States by virtue of a person's participation in any benefit program administered by VA. Information may be disclosed under this routine use only to the extent that it is reasonably necessary for the following purposes: (a) To assist VA in collection of title 38 overpayments, overdue indebtedness, and/or costs of services provided individuals not entitled to such services; and (b) to initiate civil or criminal legal actions for collecting amounts owed to the United States and/or for prosecuting individuals who willfully or fraudulently obtain title 38 benefits without entitlement. This disclosure is consistent with 38 U.S.C. 5701(b)(6).

7. The name and address of a veteran, other information as is reasonably necessary to identify such veteran, including personal information obtained from other Federal agencies through computer matching programs, and any information concerning the veteran's indebtedness to the United States by virtue of the person's participation in a benefits program administered by VA may be disclosed to a consumer reporting agency for purposes of assisting in the collection of such indebtedness, provided that the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5701(g)(4) have been met.

8. The name of a veteran, or other beneficiary, other information as is reasonably necessary to identify such individual, and any information concerning the individual's indebtedness by virtue of a person's participation in a medical care and

treatment program administered by VA, may be disclosed to the Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service, for the collection of indebtedness arising from such program by the withholding of all or a portion of the person's Federal income tax refund. These records may be disclosed as part of a computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

9. Relevant information (excluding medical treatment information related to drug or alcohol abuse, infection with the human immunodeficiency virus or sickle cell anemia) may be disclosed to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the purpose of identifying improper duplicate payments made by Medicare fiscal intermediaries where VA authorized and was responsible for payment for medical services obtained at non-VA health care facilities.

10. The social security number, universal personal identification number and other identifying information of a health care provider may be disclosed to a third party where the third party requires the agency to provide that information before it will pay for medical care provided by VA.

11. Relevant information may be disclosed to individuals, organizations, private or public agencies, etc., with whom VA has a contract or agreement to perform such services as VA may deem practical for the purposes of laws administered by VA, in order for the contractor to perform the services of the contract or agreement.

12. Relevant information from this system of records may be disclosed to the National Practitioner Data Bank and/or State Licensing Board in the State(s) in which a practitioner is licensed, in which the VA facility is located, and/or in which an act or omission occurred upon which a medical malpractice claim was based when VA reports information concerning: (a) Any payment for the benefit of a physician, dentist, or other licensed health care practitioner which was made as the result of a settlement or judgment of a claim of medical malpractice if an appropriate determination is made in accordance with agency policy that payment was related to substandard care, professional incompetence or professional misconduct on the part of the individual; (b) a final decision which relates to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct that adversely affects the clinical privileges of a physician or dentist for a period longer than 30 days; or, (c) the acceptance of the surrender of clinical privileges or any restriction of such privileges by a physician or dentist

either while under investigation by the health care entity relating to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct, or in return for not conducting such an investigation or proceeding. These records may also be disclosed as part of a computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

13. Patient identifying information may be disclosed from this system or records to any third party or Federal agency such as the Department of Defense, Office of Personnel Management, HHS and government-wide third-party insurers responsible for payment of the cost of medical care for the identified patients in order for VA to seek recovery of the medical care costs. These records may also be disclosed as part of a computer-matching program to accomplish these purposes.

14. Relevant information, including the nature and amount of a financial obligation, may be disclosed, in order to assist VA in the collection of unpaid financial obligations owed the VA, to a debtor's employing agency or commanding officer so that the debtor-employee may be counseled by his or her Federal employer or commanding officer. This purpose is consistent with 5 U.S.C. 5514, 4 CFR 102.5, and section 206 of Executive Order 11222 of May 8, 1965 (30 FR 6469).

DISCLOSURE TO CONSUMER REPORTING AGENCIES:

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(b)(12), VA may disclose records from this system to consumer reporting agencies as defined in the Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. 1681a(f)) or the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966 (31 U.S.C. 3701(a)(3)).

POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR STORING, RETRIEVING, ACCESSING, RETAINING, AND DISPOSING OF RECORDS IN THE SYSTEM:

STORAGE:

Records are maintained on paper or electronic media.

RETRIEVABILITY:

Records are retrieved by name, social security number or other assigned identifier of the individuals on whom they are maintained or by specific bill number assigned to the claim of the individuals on whom they are maintained.

SAFEGUARDS:

1. Access to VA working and storage areas is restricted to VA employees on a "need-to-know" basis. Strict control measures are enforced to ensure that disclosure to these individuals is also based on this same principle. Generally,

VA file areas are locked after normal duty hours and the facilities are protected from outside access by the Federal Protective Service or other security personnel.

2. Information in VistA may only be accessed by authorized VA personnel. Access to file information is controlled at two levels. The systems recognize authorized personnel by series of individually unique passwords/codes as a part of each data message, and personnel are limited to only that information in the file, which is needed in the performance of their official duties. Information that is downloaded from VistA and maintained on personal computers is afforded similar storage and access protections as the data that is maintained in the original files. Access to information stored on automated storage media at other VA locations is controlled by individually unique passwords/codes. Access by Office of Inspector General (OIG) staff conducting an audit, investigation, or inspection at the health care facility, or an OIG office location remote from the health care facility, is controlled in the same manner.

3. Information downloaded from VistA and maintained by the OIG headquarters and Field Offices on automated storage media is secured in storage areas for facilities to which only OIG staff have access. Paper documents are similarly secured. Access to paper documents and information on automated storage media is limited to OIG employees who have a need for the information in the performance of their official duties. Access to information stored on automated storage media is controlled by individually unique passwords/codes.

4. Access to the VA Austin Automation Center (AAC) is generally restricted to AAC employees, custodial personnel, Federal Protective Service

and other security personnel. Access to computer rooms is restricted to authorized operational personnel through electronic locking devices. All other persons gaining access to computer rooms are escorted. Information stored in the AAC databases may be accessed.

5. Access to records maintained at the VA Allocation Resource Center (ARC) and the VISN Offices is restricted to VA employees who have a need for the information in the performance of their official duties. Access to information stored in electronic format is controlled by individually unique passwords/codes. Records are maintained in manned rooms during working hours. The facilities are protected from outside access during non-working hours by the Federal Protective Service or other security personnel.

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL:

Paper records and information stored on electronic storage media are maintained and disposed of in accordance with records disposition authority approved by the Archivist of the United States.

SYSTEM MANAGER(S) AND ADDRESS:

The official responsible for policies and procedures is the Director, Revenue Office (174), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420. The local officials responsible for maintaining the system are the Director of the facility where the individual is or was associated.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE:

An individual who wishes to determine whether a record is being maintained in this system under his or her name or other personal identifier, or wants to determine the contents of such record, should submit a written request or apply in person to the last VA health

care facility where care was rendered. Addresses of VA health care facilities may be found in VA Appendix 1 of the biennial publication of VA Privacy Act Issuances. All inquiries must reasonably identify the place and approximate date that medical care was provided. Inquiries should include the patient's full name, social security number, insurance company information, policyholder and policy identification number as well as a return address.

RECORD ACCESS PROCEDURE:

Individuals seeking information regarding access to and contesting of records in this system may write, call or visit the VA facility location where they were treated.

CONTESTING RECORD PROCEDURES:

(See Record Access Procedures above.)

RECORD SOURCE CATEGORIES:

The patient, family members or guardian, and friends, employers or other third parties when otherwise unobtainable from the patient or family; health insurance carriers; private medical facilities and health care professionals; State and local agencies; other Federal agencies; VA regional offices; Veterans Benefits Administration automated record systems, including Veterans and Beneficiaries Identification and Records Location Subsystem—VA (38VA23) and the Compensation, Pension, Education and Rehabilitation Records—VA (58VA21/22); and various automated systems providing clinical and managerial support at VA health care facilities to include Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) (79VA19).

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