

Bur. of Consumer Financial Protection**§ 1022.139 [Reserved]****Subpart O—Miscellaneous Duties of Consumer Reporting Agencies****§ 1022.140 Prohibition against circumventing or evading treatment as a consumer reporting agency.**

(a) A consumer reporting agency shall not circumvent or evade treatment as a “consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis,” as defined under section 603(p) of the FCRA, 15 U.S.C. 1681a(p), by any means, including, but not limited to:

(1) Corporate organization, reorganization, structure, or restructuring, including merger, acquisition, dissolution, divestiture, or asset sale of a consumer reporting agency; or

(2) Maintaining or merging public record and credit account information in a manner that is substantially equivalent to that described in Paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 603(p) of the FCRA, 15 U.S.C. 1681a(p).

(b) Examples:

(1) *Circumvention through reorganization by data type.* XYZ Inc. is a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis. It restructures its operations so that public record information is assembled and maintained only by its corporate affiliate, ABC Inc. XYZ continues operating as a consumer reporting agency but ceases to comply with the FCRA obligations of a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis, asserting that it no longer meets the definition found in FCRA section 603(p), because it no longer maintains public record information. XYZ’s conduct is a circumvention or evasion of treatment as a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis, and thus violates this section.

(2) *Circumvention through reorganization by regional operations.* PDQ Inc. is a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis. It restructures its operations so that corporate affiliates separately assemble and maintain all information on consumers residing

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in each state. PDQ continues to operate as a consumer reporting agency but ceases to comply with the FCRA obligations of a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis, asserting that it no longer meets the definition found in FCRA section 603(p), because it no longer operates on a nationwide basis. PDQ’s conduct is a circumvention or evasion of treatment as a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis, and thus violates this section.

(3) *Circumvention by a newly formed entity.* Smith Co. is a new entrant in the marketplace for consumer reports that bear on a consumer’s credit worthiness, standing and capacity. Smith Co. organizes itself into two affiliated companies: Smith Credit Co. and Smith Public Records Co. Smith Credit Co. assembles and maintains credit account information from persons who furnish that information regularly and in the ordinary course of business on consumers residing nationwide. Smith Public Records Co. assembles and maintains public record information on consumers nationwide. Neither Smith Co. nor its affiliated organizations comply with FCRA obligations of consumer reporting agencies that compile and maintain files on consumers on a nationwide basis. Smith Co.’s conduct is a circumvention or evasion of treatment as a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis, and thus violates this section.

(4) *Bona fide, arm’s length transaction with unaffiliated party.* Foster Ltd. is a consumer reporting agency that compiles and maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis. Foster Ltd. sells its public record information business to an unaffiliated company in a bona fide, arm’s length transaction. Foster Ltd. ceases to assemble, evaluate and maintain public record information on consumers residing nationwide, and ceases to offer reports containing public record information. Foster Ltd.’s conduct is not a circumvention or evasion of treatment as a consumer reporting agency that compiles and

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maintains files on consumers on a nationwide basis. Foster Ltd.'s conduct does not violate this part.

(c) *Limitation on applicability.* Any person who is otherwise in violation of paragraph (a) of this section shall be deemed to be in compliance with this part if such person is in compliance with all obligations imposed upon consumer reporting agencies that compile and maintain files on consumers on a nationwide basis under the FCRA, 15 U.S.C. 1681 *et seq.*

APPENDIX A TO PART 1022 [RESERVED]**APPENDIX B TO PART 1022—MODEL NOTICES OF FURNISHING NEGATIVE INFORMATION**

a. Although use of the model notices is not required, a financial institution that is subject to section 623(a)(7) of the FCRA shall be deemed to be in compliance with the notice requirement in section 623(a)(7) of the FCRA if the institution properly uses the model notices in this appendix (as applicable).

b. A financial institution may use Model Notice B-1 if the institution provides the notice prior to furnishing negative information to a nationwide consumer reporting agency.

c. A financial institution may use Model Notice B-2 if the institution provides the notice after furnishing negative information to a nationwide consumer reporting agency.

d. Financial institutions may make certain changes to the language or format of the model notices without losing the safe harbor from liability provided by the model notices. The changes to the model notices may not be so extensive as to affect the substance, clarity, or meaningful sequence of the language in the model notices. Financial institutions making such extensive revisions will lose the safe harbor from liability that this appendix provides. Acceptable changes include, for example,

1. Rearranging the order of the references to "late payment(s)," or "missed payment(s)."

2. Pluralizing the terms "credit bureau," "credit report," and "account."

3. Specifying the particular type of account on which information may be furnished, such as "credit card account."

4. Rearranging in Model Notice B-1 the phrases "information about your account" and "to credit bureaus" such that it would read "We may report to credit bureaus information about your account."

MODEL NOTICE B-1

We may report information about your account to credit bureaus. Late payments, missed payments, or other defaults on your

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account may be reflected in your credit report.

MODEL NOTICE B-2

We have told a credit bureau about a late payment, missed payment or other default on your account. This information may be reflected in your credit report.

APPENDIX C TO PART 1022—MODEL FORMS FOR OPT-OUT NOTICES

a. Although use of the model forms is not required, use of the model forms in this appendix (as applicable) complies with the requirement in section 624 of the Act for clear, conspicuous, and concise notices.

b. Certain changes may be made to the language or format of the model forms without losing the protection from liability afforded by use of the model forms. These changes may not be so extensive as to affect the substance, clarity, or meaningful sequence of the language in the model forms. Persons making such extensive revisions will lose the safe harbor that this appendix provides. Acceptable changes include, for example:

1. Rearranging the order of the references to "your income," "your account history," and "your credit score."

2. Substituting other types of information for "income," "account history," or "credit score" for accuracy, such as "payment history," "credit history," "payoff status," or "claims history."

3. Substituting a clearer and more accurate description of the affiliates providing or covered by the notice for phrases such as "the [ABC] group of companies," including without limitation a statement that the entity providing the notice recently purchased the consumer's account.

4. Substituting other types of affiliates covered by the notice for "credit card," "insurance," or "securities" affiliates.

5. Omitting items that are not accurate or applicable. For example, if a person does not limit the duration of the opt-out period, the notice may omit information about the renewal notice.

6. Adding a statement informing consumers how much time they have to opt out before shared eligibility information may be used to make solicitations to them.

7. Adding a statement that the consumer may exercise the right to opt out at any time.

8. Adding the following statement, if accurate: "If you previously opted out, you do not need to do so again."

9. Providing a place on the form for the consumer to fill in identifying information, such as his or her name and address.

10. Adding disclosures regarding the treatment of opt-outs by joint consumers to comply with §1022.23(a)(2) of this part.