

§ 14.803

through contractual agreements by or on behalf of the VA, or performing services under such agreements for VA, such as consultants, contractors, subcontractors, their employees and personnel. This phrase also includes individuals who served or are serving on any advisory committee or in any advisory capacity, whether formal or informal.

(d) *Legal proceedings.* All pretrial, trial, and post-trial stages of all existing or reasonably anticipated judicial or administrative actions, hearings, investigations, or similar proceedings before courts, commissions, boards, or other tribunals, foreign or domestic that are not specified in § 14.801(b). This phrase includes depositions and other pretrial proceedings, as well as responses to formal or informal requests by attorneys or others in situations involving legal proceedings not specified in § 14.801(b).

(e) *Official VA information.* All information of any kind, however stored, that is in the custody and control of VA or was acquired by VA personnel as part of their official duties or because of their official status.

(f) *Testimony.* Testimony in any form, including personal appearances in court, depositions, recorded interviews, telephonic, televised or videotaped testimony or any response during discovery or similar proceedings, which response would involve more than the production of records.

(g) *VA records.* All documents which are records of the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, regardless of storage media, including the term “record” as defined in 44 U.S.C. 3301, and implementing regulations.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a) and (b); 5 U.S.C. 301)

§ 14.803 Policy.

(a) VA personnel may provide testimony or produce VA records in legal proceedings covered by §§ 14.800 through 14.810 only as authorized in accordance with these regulations. In determining whether to authorize testimony or the production of records, the determining official will consider the effect in this case, as well as in future cases gen-

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erally, based on the factors set forth in § 14.804, which testifying or producing records not available for public disclosure will have on the ability of the agency or VA personnel to perform their official duties.

(b) The Department of Veterans Affairs does not seek to deny its employees access to the courts as citizens, or in the employees’ private capacities on off-duty time.

(c) The Department of Veterans Affairs does not seek to deny the Nation’s veterans access to the courts.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501 (a) and (b); 5 U.S.C. 301)

§ 14.804 Factors to consider.

In deciding whether to authorize the disclosure of VA records or information or the testimony of VA personnel, VA personnel responsible for making the decision should consider the following types of factors:

(a) The need to avoid spending the time and money of the United States for private purposes and to conserve the time of VA personnel for conducting their official duties concerning servicing the Nation’s veteran population;

(b) How the testimony or production of records would assist VA in performing its statutory duties;

(c) Whether the disclosure of the records or presentation of testimony is necessary to prevent the perpetration of fraud or other injustice in the matter in question;

(d) Whether the demand or request is unduly burdensome or otherwise inappropriate under the applicable court or administrative rules;

(e) Whether the testimony or production of records, including release in camera, is appropriate or necessary under the rules of procedure governing the case or matter in which the demand or request arose, or under the relevant substantive law concerning privilege;

(f) Whether the testimony or production of records would violate a statute, executive order, regulation or directive. (Where the production of a record or testimony as to the content of a record or about information contained in a record would violate a confidentiality statute’s prohibition against

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disclosure, disclosure will not be made. Examples of such statutes are the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and sections 5701, 5705 and 7332 of title 38, United States Code.);

(g) Whether the testimony or production of records, except when *in camera* and necessary to assert a claim of privilege, would reveal information properly classified pursuant to applicable statutes or Executive Orders;

(h) Whether the testimony would interfere with ongoing law enforcement proceedings, compromise constitutional rights, compromise national security interests, hamper VA or private health care research activities, reveal sensitive patient or beneficiary information, interfere with patient care, disclose trade secrets or similarly confidential commercial or financial information or otherwise be inappropriate under the circumstances.

(i) Whether such release or testimony reasonably could be expected to result in the appearance of VA or the Federal government favoring one litigant over another;

(j) Whether such release or testimony reasonably could be expected to result in the appearance of VA or the Federal government endorsing or supporting a position advocated by a party to the proceeding;

(k) The need to prevent the public's possible misconstruction of variances between personal opinions of VA personnel and VA or Federal policy.

(l) The need to minimize VA's possible involvement in issues unrelated to its mission;

(m) Whether the demand or request is within the authority of the party making it;

(n) Whether the demand or request is sufficiently specific to be answered;

(o) Other matters or concerns presented for consideration in making the decision.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501 (a) and (b); 5 U.S.C. 301)

§ 14.805 Contents of a demand or request.

The request or demand for testimony or production of documents shall set forth in, or be accompanied by, an affidavit, or if that is not feasible, in, or accompanied by, a written statement

by the party seeking the testimony or records or by the party's attorney, a summary of the nature and relevance of the testimony or records sought in the legal proceedings containing sufficient information for the responsible VA official to determine whether VA personnel should be allowed to testify or records should be produced. Where the materials are considered insufficient to make the determination as described in § 14.807, the responsible VA official may ask the requester to provide additional information.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501 (a) and (b); 5 U.S.C. 301)

§ 14.806 Scope of testimony or production.

VA personnel shall not, in response to a request or demand for testimony or production of records in legal proceedings, comment or testify or produce records without the prior written approval of the responsible VA official designated in § 14.807(b). VA personnel may only testify concerning or comment upon official VA information, subjects or activities, or produce records, that were specified in writing, submitted to and properly approved by the responsible VA official.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501 (a) and (b); 5 U.S.C. 301)

§ 14.807 Procedure when demand or request is made.

(a) VA personnel upon whom a demand or request for testimony or the production of records in connection with legal proceedings as defined in § 14.802(d) is made shall notify the head of his or her field station, or if in Central Office, the head of the component for which he or she works. The field station or Central Office component shall notify the responsible VA official designated in § 14.807(b).

(b) In response to a demand or request for the production of records or the testimony of VA personnel, other than personnel in the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), as witnesses in legal proceedings covered by these regulations, the General Counsel, the Regional Counsel, an attorney in the Office of General Counsel designated by the General Counsel, or an attorney in the Regional Counsel office designated