

(6) **DISCLOSURE OF MEDICAL INFORMATION.** (a) *To veterans.* Information contained in medical records pertaining to applications for benefits from the department which are on file with the department or service office may be released to the veteran upon request, except information contained in the medical record which would prove injurious to his physical or mental health, in which case information will be released only to his duly authorized representative.

(b) *To physicians and hospitals.* Information contained in medical records of veterans and beneficiaries pertaining to medical history, diagnosis, findings, or treatment contained in applications for benefits from the department may be disclosed directly to physicians and hospitals upon written request and the submission of a written authorization from the veteran or beneficiary, or, in the event he is incompetent, from his duly authorized representative. This information will be released only with the consent of the patient and on the condition that it is to be treated as a privileged communication. However, such information may be released without the consent of the veteran or his representative when a written request for such information is received from the veterans administration, the United States public health service, the superintendent of a state hospital, a commissioner or head of a state department of mental hygiene, or head of a state, county or city health department.

(7) **DISCLOSURE OF LOAN INFORMATION.** Information contained in loan files, information pertaining to action taken by the department on loan applications, or loan status information may be made available to any party having a security interest in the property securing such loans. Loan status information that is readily accessible from current department computer tapes on any loans on which balances are due and owing the department may be made available to a consumer reporting agency, as defined in 15 USC 1681a (f).

(8) **DISCLOSURE TO GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND SCHOOLS.** Information contained in department or service office files pertaining to applications for benefits from the department which is required for official use by any agency of the United States government, by any agency of the state of Wisconsin, by any law enforcement or social service agency of any Wisconsin county or municipality, or by any school participating in the department's grants programs, may be furnished in response to official requests in accordance with the provision of pars. (a) to (c). Such requests must include information as to the purpose for which the information is to be used.

(a) Information relevant to a determination of the amount of benefits, if any, for which veterans and their eligible dependents may be entitled, information which is requested on their behalf or information which is requested for the purpose of assisting them in obtaining rights and benefits to which they may be entitled, may be released in response to official written or oral requests.

(b) Information which identifies individual veterans or their dependents, and which is requested for purposes other than those set forth in par. (a), may be released only upon receipt of an official written request. Within 5 working days after response to such a written request, the department or service office will make a reasonable effort to contact the individual concerning whom the request has been made and notify the individual of the request for information and provide the individual with a statement of the action taken on such request.

(c) The department may routinely furnish information to other agencies which does not identify individual veterans or dependents.

(9) **DISCLOSURE TO STATE LEGISLATORS.** Individual members of the senate and assembly may be furnished such information contained in department or service office files which pertains to applications for benefits from the department as may be requested, orally or in writing, on behalf of the veterans or their dependents or for the purpose of assisting them to obtain the rights and benefits to which they may be entitled. Committees of the senate and assembly may be furnished such information contained in department or service office files which pertains to applications for benefits from the department as may be requested for official use.

(10) **DISCLOSURE TO COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS.** A county veterans service officer may be permitted to inspect records pertaining to any application for benefits in which such office may be involved or may be furnished information or exhibits from such an application or the payment status or the payment history pertinent to department loans upon the condition that only such information contained therein or furnished therefrom as may be properly disclosed will be disclosed to the applicant only or, if the applicant is incompetent, the applicant's legally constituted representative. The department shall inform a county veterans service officer whose office is involved in an application for benefits of information necessary to complete such application and of action taken by the department thereon.

(11) **DISCLOSURE TO AUDITORS.** Department records and files shall be made available for inspection by, and information contained in department files shall be made available to, the legislative audit bureau or the legislative fiscal bureau in accordance with ss. 13.94 (1) to (4) and 13.95 (1) and (2), Stats., or to independent auditors only for statistical or audit reporting purposes upon the condition that information reported by such auditors or bureaus will not identify any specific individual by name or be reported in such manner as to clearly identify a specific individual.

(12) **APPLICATION STATUS INFORMATION.** Information on the status of an application for a department benefit, or for the establishment of eligibility for a department benefit, may be released to a party having an interest in the veteran or dependent obtaining the benefit applied for or establishing eligibility to apply for a specific department benefit, or to a person who is calling on behalf of an applicant for a department benefit.

(13) **RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO AUTHORIZED LENDERS.** All information and exhibits in the possession of the department pertaining to direct housing loan applications or direct housing loans may be released to authorized lenders servicing, closing or processing the applications or loans involved.

(15) **JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS.** When records pertaining to any application for benefits are requested for use in any judicial proceedings, they will be released only upon service of a proper subpoena and upon the condition that they will be returned upon conclusion of such proceedings.

(16) **ADDRESSES OF APPLICANTS.** Addresses of applicants for benefits from the department which are contained in department or service office records will not be furnished, except as provided in subs. (5) through (15). When an address is requested by a person to whom it may not be furnished, the person making the written request will be informed that

correspondence enclosed in an unsealed envelope showing no return address, with the name of the addressee thereon and bearing sufficient postage to cover mailing costs, will be forwarded by the department or service office to such addressee's last known address. At the time the correspondence is forwarded, the return address of only the department or service office will be placed on the envelope. If such forwarded mail is returned to the department or service office as not deliverable, the original sender will be notified thereof, but the envelope will be retained by the department or service office. In no case will letters be forwarded for the purposes of debt collection, canvassing, or harassment. This section shall not apply to the furnishing of addresses by service officers to the department or vice versa.

History: Cr. Register, March, 1965, No. 111, eff. 4-1-65; am. intro. par., r. and recr. (1), am. (4), (6), (7), (8), (9), (12), r. (13), Register, October, 1967, No. 142, eff. 11-1-67; am. (7), Register, June, 1970, No. 174, eff. 7-1-70; am. (7) and (10), Register, November, 1971, No. 191, eff. 12-1-71; am. (1), (3), (6) (b), (9) and (10), r. and recr. (8), renum. (11) and (12) to be (15) and (16), cr. (11), (12) and (13), am. (16), Register, November, 1980, No. 299, eff. 12-1-80; am. (7), Register, September, 1990, No. 417, eff. 10-1-90.

VA 1.11 Duties and responsibilities of the secretary. The administrative and executive duties of the department shall be vested in the secretary to be administered under the rules and regulations of the department and subject to and in accordance with the policies established by the board. The secretary shall:

(1) Employ a commandant for the Wisconsin Veterans Home, designate an employe of the department as deputy secretary, and appoint such persons as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the department.

(2) Administer and supervise all programs of the department, and shall serve as an ex-officio member of all advisory, standing and special committees appointed by the board, unless specifically exempted.

(3) Coordinate the activities of the department with all state agencies performing functions relating to services available to veterans so as to make the benefits available as promptly and effectively as possible.

(4) Administer the program for temporary emergency grants to prevent want and distress and the program for educational grants for veterans.

(5) Administer the economic assistance and housing loan programs for veterans.

(7) Compile a record of the burial places within the state of persons who served in the armed forces of the United States in time of war, who were called into service in the 1961 Berlin crisis call-up, whose service entitled them to receive either the armed forces expeditionary medal or the Vietnam service medal, or who served in Lebanon or Grenada under s. 45.34, Stats.

(8) Direct the operation of the Home for Veterans at King through the commandant so as to provide that members receive complete personal maintenance and medical care.

(9) Direct the operation of the G.A.R. Memorial Hall so as to make the memorial collection instructive and attractive to visitors to the state capitol and shall directly supervise the curator of the Hall.

(10) Formulate and present the department's budget to the legislature.

(11) Present to the legislature all proposed legislation recommended by the board and shall make such reports to and appearances before the legislature on such other matters as it may request.

(12) Supervise all funds of the department, see that proper records are kept, and account for all funds disbursed for any reason whatsoever.

(13) Make such regular reports to the board as the board may request.

(14) Conduct an adequate program of public relations for the department.

(15) Make and establish rules and regulations necessary to carry out the statutes pursuant to the policies established by the board, and make such publication and distribution of these rules and regulations as the secretary may deem necessary.

(16) Attempt to obtain full collection of all loans and may take all available legal steps to effect collection provided, however, that the secretary shall have the authority to approve compromise settlements in appropriate cases and write-off loans which the department deems uncollectable.

(17) Administer the functions of the department in a careful and businesslike manner.

(18) If the secretary deems it appropriate to do so, or is directed by the board to do so, refer any problems arising from the discharge of the above duties to an appropriate committee or council appointed by the board for counsel and advice.

History: Cr. Register, March, 1965, No. 111, eff. 4-1-65; am. intro. par., (4), (5), r. (6), am. (7), Register, October, 1967, No. 142, eff. 11-1-67; am. (9), Register, November, 1971, No. 191, eff. 12-1-71; am. Register, January, 1984, No. 337, eff. 2-1-84; am. (1), (2) and (7), Register, April, 1986, No. 364, eff. 5-1-86.

VA 1.12 Applicant and income limitations. (1) NUMBER OF APPLICANTS. The department will not accept more than 2 applicants for any department loan and will not accept more than 2 signers as makers on credit instruments to be executed in connection with such loans. Guarantors will not be accepted by the department for the purpose of making housing loan applications creditworthy.

(2) INCLUSION OF INCOME. A person's income shall not be deemed to be available as regular and dependable for the purposes of s. 45.351 (2) or 45.71 (9), Stats., unless such person is the veteran applicant or is a co-applicant who is either residing with the veteran applicant or who will jointly own and occupy the homestead to be purchased or constructed by the veteran applicant with the assistance of a department loan.

(3) CO-APPLICANTS. Subject to the provisions of subs. (1) and (2), the department shall consider the income, assets and debts of any applicant who is willing to sign all required credit instruments to be executed in connection with the loan for which application has been made and upon whom a complete application has been submitted to the department for the purposes of ss. 45.351 and 45.71 (9), Stats., for the purpose of determining the creditworthiness of the application and for the purpose of determining its compliance with the provisions of ss. 45.351 (2), and Register, September, 1990, No. 417

45.74 (1), (2), (3) and (5), Stats. An application must always be completed on the veteran applicant.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of subs. (1) to (3), if a veteran applicant is married and not separated or in the process of obtaining a divorce, such applicant's spouse shall be a co-applicant for any department loan and must complete and sign the loan application and all credit instruments required to be executed in conjunction with the loan. If a veteran applicant is separated or in the process of obtaining a divorce, such veteran's spouse shall not be required to be a co-applicant for loan under s. 45.351 (2) or subch. II of ch. 45, Stats., and such spouse's income, assets and debts shall not be considered by the department. In order to be considered "separated" for the purposes of this subsection, a veteran and spouse must either be legally separated or must have been living in different dwellings for at least 3 months immediately next preceding the veteran's application for a loan. In order to be considered in the process of obtaining a divorce for the purposes of this subsection, a petition for a divorce of the veteran and spouse must have been filed with a court.

(5) ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE LOANS. There must be a minimum of 3 signers on guaranteed economic assistance loan notes, not more than 2 of whom may be makers and at least one of whom must be a guarantor.

History: Cr. Register, October, 1976, No. 250, eff. 11-1-76; r. (4), Register, December, 1979, No. 288, eff. 1-1-80; cr. (4), Register, February, 1981, No. 302, eff. 3-1-81; correction in (3) made under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 7, Stats., Register, April, 1986, No. 364.

VA 1.13 Discrimination prohibited. Discrimination against properly qualified persons in the provision of veterans assistance under ch. 45 on the basis of age, race, creed, color, handicap, sex, national origin or ancestry, is prohibited, and except that all persons employed by the department shall if possible be veterans as defined in s. 45.35 (5), Stats., and that preference shall be given to disabled veterans, discrimination against qualified persons in the employment of staff on the basis of age, race, creed, color, handicap, sex, national origin or ancestry is prohibited.

History: Cr. Register, October, 1976, No. 250, eff. 11-1-76; r. and recr., Register, December, 1979, No. 288, eff. 1-1-80.

VA 1.14 Lebanon withdrawal. The date of withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Lebanon is established as August 1, 1984 for the purposes of s. 45.34, Stats.

History: Cr. Register, April, 1986, No. 364, eff. 5-1-86.

VA 1.15 Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter and chs. VA 2 to 9:

(1) "Department" means the department of veterans affairs.

(2) "Board" means the board of veterans affairs.

(3) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of veterans affairs.

History: Cr. Register, April, 1986, No. 364, eff. 5-1-86; cr. (3), Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.