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should be permitted to offer a satisfactory payment plan in lieu of offset upon establishing that changed financial circumstances would render the offset unjust.

(d) If the Commission collects part or all of the debt by other means before deductions are made or completed pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section, it shall act promptly to modify or terminate its request for offset under paragraph (a) of this section.

(e) This section does not require or authorize the Office of Personnel Management to review the merits of the Commission's determination with respect to the amount and validity of the debt, its determination as to waiver under an applicable statute, or its determination to provide or not provide an oral hearing.

§ 1.1914 Collection in installments.

(a) Whenever feasible, and except as otherwise provided by law, debts owed to the United States, together with interest, penalties, and administrative costs as required by this subpart should be collected in full in one lump sum. This is true whether the debt is being collected by administrative offset or by another method, including voluntary payment. However, if the debtor is financially unable to pay the indebtedness in one lump sum, payment may be accepted in regular installments. The Commission will obtain financial statements from debtors who represent that they are unable to pay the debt in one lump sum. If the Commission agrees to accept payment in regular installments, it will obtain a legally enforceable written agreement from the debtor which specifies all of the terms of the agreement and which contains a provision accelerating the debt in the event the debtor defaults. The size and frequency of installment payments should bear a reasonable relation to the size of the debtor and debtor's ability to pay. If possible, the installment payments should be of sufficient size and frequency to liquidate the Government's claim in not more than 3 years. Installment payments of less than \$50 per month will be accepted only if justifiable on the grounds of financial hardship or for some other reasonable cause.

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(b) If the debtor owes more than one debt and designates how a voluntary installment is to be applied among those debts, that designation must be followed. If the debtor does not designate the application of the payment, the Commission will apply payments to various debts in accordance with the best interests of the United States, as determined by the facts and circumstances of the particular case, paying special attention to applicable statutes of limitations.

§ 1.1915 Exploration of compromise.

The Commission may attempt to effect compromise, preferably during the course of personal interviews, in accordance with the standards set forth in Part 103 of the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR part 103).

§ 1.1916 Suspending or terminating collection action.

The suspension or termination of collection action shall be made in accordance with the standards set forth in Part 104 of the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR part 104).

§ 1.1917 Referrals to the Department of Justice or the General Accounting Office.

Referrals to the Department of Justice or the General Accounting Office shall be made in accordance with the standards set forth in Part 105 of the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR part 105).

§ 1.1918 Use of consumer reporting agencies.

(a) The term *individual* means a natural person, and the term *consumer reporting agency* has the meaning provided in the Federal Claims Collection Act, as amended, at 31 U.S.C. 3701(a)(3) or the Fair Credit Reporting Act, at 15 U.S.C. 168a(f).

(b) The Commission may disclose to a consumer reporting agency, from a system of records, information that an individual is responsible for a claim if—

(1) Notice required by section 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4) indicates that information in the system may be disclosed to a consumer reporting agency;

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(2) The claim has been reviewed and it is decided that the claim is valid and overdue;

(3) The Commission has notified the individual in writing—

(i) That payment of the claim is overdue;

(ii) That, within not less than 60 days after sending the notice, the Commission intends to disclose to a consumer reporting agency that the individual is responsible for that claim;

(iii) Of the specific information to be disclosed to the consumer reporting agency; and

(iv) Of the rights the individual has to a complete explanation of the claim, to dispute information in the records of the agency about the claim, and to administrative appeal or review of the claim; and

(4) The individual has not—

(i) Repaid or agreed to repay the claim under a written repayment plan that the individual has signed and the agency has agreed to; or

(ii) Filed for review of the claim under paragraph (g) of this section;

(c) The Commission shall—

(1) Disclose promptly, to each consumer reporting agency to which the original disclosure was made, a substantial change in the condition or amount of the claim;

(2) Verify or correct promptly information about the claim, on request of a consumer reporting agency for verification of any or all information so disclosed; and

(3) Obtain satisfactory assurances from each consumer reporting agency that they are complying with all laws of the United States relating to providing consumer credit information.

(d) The Commission shall ensure that information disclosed to the consumer reporting agency is limited to—

(1) Information necessary to establish the identity of the individual, including name, address, and taxpayer identification number;

(2) The amount, status, and history of the claim; and

(3) The agency or program under which the claim arose.

(e) All accounts in excess of \$100 that have been delinquent more than 31 days will normally be referred to a consumer reporting agency.

(f) Before disclosing information to a consumer reporting agency, the Commission shall take reasonable action to locate an individual for whom the head of the agency does not have a current address to send the notice.

(g) Before disclosing information to a consumer reporting agency, the Commission shall provide, on request of an individual alleged by the agency to be responsible for the claim, for a review of the obligation of the individual, including an opportunity for reconsideration of the initial decision on the claim.

(h) Under the same provisions as described above, the Commission may disclose to a credit reporting agency, information relating to a debtor other than a natural person. Such commercial debt accounts are not covered by the Privacy Act.

§ 1.1919 Contracting for collection services.

(a) The Commission has authority to contract for collection services to recover delinquent debts, provided that the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The authority to resolve disputes, compromise claims, suspend or terminate collection action, and refer the matter for litigation is retained by the agency;

(2) The contractor shall be subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, to the extent specified in 5 U.S.C. 552a(m), and to applicable Federal and State laws and regulations pertaining to debt collection practices, such as the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. 1692;

(3) The contractor must be required to account strictly for all amounts collected;

(4) The contractor must agree that uncollectible accounts shall be returned with appropriate documentation to enable the Commission to determine whether to pursue collection through litigation or to terminate collection efforts; and

(5) The contractor must agree to provide any data contained in its files relating to paragraphs (a) (1), (2), and (3) of § 105.2 of the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR part 105) upon