

## Social Security Administration

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the Congress, but does include State agencies, individuals, corporations, and most other parties. The FOIA does not apply to requests that are not from *the public* (e.g., from a Federal agency). However, we apply FOIA principles to requests from these other sources for disclosure of program information.

### § 401.135 Other laws.

When the FOIA does not apply, we may not disclose any personal information unless both the Privacy Act and section 1106 of the Social Security Act permit the disclosure. Section 1106 of the Social Security Act requires that disclosures which may be made must be set out in statute or regulations; therefore, any disclosure permitted by this part is permitted by section 1106.

### § 401.140 General principles.

When no law specifically requiring or prohibiting disclosure applies to a question of whether to disclose information, we follow FOIA principles to resolve that question. We do this to insure uniform treatment in all situations. The FOIA principle which most often applies to SSA disclosure questions is whether the disclosure would result in a “clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” To decide whether a disclosure would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy we consider—

(a) The sensitivity of the information (e.g., whether individuals would suffer harm or embarrassment as a result of the disclosure);

(b) The public interest in the disclosure;

(c) The rights and expectations of individuals to have their personal information kept confidential;

(d) The public’s interest in maintaining general standards of confidentiality of personal information; and

(e) The existence of safeguards against unauthorized redisclosure or use.

### § 401.145 Safeguards against unauthorized redisclosure or use.

(a) The FOIA does not authorize us to impose any restrictions on how information is used after we disclose it under that law. In applying FOIA principles, we consider whether the infor-

mation will be adequately safeguarded against improper use or redisclosure. We must consider all the ways in which the recipient might use the information and how likely the recipient is to redisclose the information to other parties. Thus, before we disclose personal information we may consider such factors as—

(1) Whether only those individuals who have a need to know the information will obtain it;

(2) Whether appropriate measures to safeguard the information to avoid unwarranted use or misuse will be taken; and

(3) Whether we would be permitted to conduct on-site inspections to see whether the safeguards are being met.

(b) We feel that there is a strong public interest in sharing information with other agencies with programs having the same or similar purposes, so we generally share information with those agencies. However, since there is usually little or no public interest in disclosing information for disputes between two private parties or for other private or commercial purposes, we generally do not share information for these purposes.

### § 401.150 Compatible purposes.

(a) *General.* The Privacy Act allows us to disclose information, without the consent of the individual, to any other party for routine uses.

(b) *Routine use.* We publish notices of systems of records in the FEDERAL REGISTER which contain a list of all *routine use* disclosures.

(c) *Determining compatibility.* We disclose information for routine uses where necessary to carry out SSA’s programs. It is also our policy to disclose information for use in other programs which have the same purposes as SSA programs if the information concerns eligibility, benefit amounts, or other matters of benefit status in a social security program and is relevant to determining the same matters in the other program. For example, we disclose information to the Railroad Retirement Board for pension and unemployment compensation programs, to the Veterans Administration for its benefit program, to worker’s compensation programs, to State general

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assistance programs, and to other income maintenance programs at all levels of government; we also disclose for health-maintenance programs like Medicare and Medicaid, and in appropriate cases, for epidemiological and similar research.

### § 401.155 Law enforcement purposes.

(a) *General.* The Privacy Act allows us to disclose information for law enforcement purposes under certain conditions. Much of the information in our files is especially sensitive or very personal. Furthermore, participation in social security programs is mandatory, so people cannot limit what information is given to us. Therefore, we generally disclose information for law enforcement purposes only in limited situations. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section discuss the disclosures we generally make for these purposes.

(b) *Serious crimes.* SSA may disclose information for criminal law enforcement purposes where a violent crime such as murder or kidnapping has been committed and the individual about whom the information is being sought has been indicted or convicted of that crime. The Privacy Act allows us to disclose if the head of the law enforcement agency makes a written request giving enough information to show that these conditions are met, what information is needed, and why it is needed.

(c) *Criminal activity involving the social security program or another program with the same purposes.* We disclose information when necessary to investigate or prosecute fraud or other criminal activity involving the social security program. We may also disclose information for investigation or prosecution of criminal activity in other income-maintenance or health-maintenance programs (e.g., other governmental pension programs, unemployment compensation, general assistance, Medicare or Medicaid) if the information concerns eligibility, benefit amounts, or other matters of benefit status in a social security program and is relevant to determining the same matters in the other program.

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### § 401.160 Health or safety.

The Privacy Act allows us to disclose information in compelling circumstances where an individual's health or safety is affected. For example, if we learn that someone has been exposed to an excessive amount of radiation, we may notify that person and appropriate health officials. If we learn that someone has made a threat against someone else, we may notify that other person and law enforcement officials. When we make these disclosures, the Privacy Act requires us to send a notice of the disclosure to the last known address of the person whose record was disclosed.

### § 401.165 Statistical and research activities.

(a) *General.* Statistical and research activities often do not require information in a format that identifies specific individuals. Therefore, whenever possible, we release information for statistical or research purposes only in the form of aggregates or individual data that cannot be associated with a particular individual. The Privacy Act allows us to release records if there are safeguards that the record will be used solely as a statistical or research record and the individual cannot be identified from any information in the record.

(b) *Safeguards for disclosure with identifiers.* The Privacy Act also allows us to disclose data for statistical and research purposes in a form allowing individual identification, pursuant to published routine use, when the purpose is compatible with the purpose for which the record was collected. We will disclose personally identifiable information for statistical and research purposes if—

(1) We determine that the requestor needs the information in an identifiable form for a statistical or research activity, will use the information only for that purpose, and will protect individuals from unreasonable and unwanted contacts;

(2) The activity is designed to increase knowledge about present or alternative social security programs or