

§ 14.802

38 CFR Ch. I (7–1–04 Edition)

§ 14.802 Definitions.

(a) *Demand.* Order, subpoena, or other demand of a court of competent jurisdiction, or other specific authority or under color of law, for the production, disclosure, or release of VA information or records or for the appearance and testimony of VA personnel as witnesses.

(b) *Request.* Any informal request, by whatever method, from a party, a party's attorney, or any person acting on behalf of a party, for the production of VA records or information or for the testimony of VA personnel as witnesses, which has not been ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction or other specific authority or under color of law.

(c) *VA personnel.* All present and former officers and employees of the VA and any other individuals who are or have been appointed by, or subject to the supervision, jurisdiction, or control of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or another official of the VA, including nonappropriated fund activity employees, and other individuals hired 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 generally, 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