

or participant's eligibility for or level of assistance under a covered program;

(3) A provision authorizing HUD to request income return information from the IRS and the SSA for the sole purpose of verifying income information pertinent to the assistance applicant's or participant's eligibility or level of benefits; and

(4) A statement that the authorization to release the information requested by the consent form expires 15 months after the date the consent form is signed.

§ 5.232 Penalties for failing to sign consent forms.

(a) *Denial or termination of benefits.* In accordance with the provisions governing the program involved, if the assistance applicant or participant, or any member of the assistance applicant's or participant's family, does not sign and submit the consent form as required in § 5.230, then:

(1) The processing entity shall deny assistance to and admission of an assistance applicant;

(2) Assistance to, and the tenancy of, a participant may be terminated.

(b) *Cross references.* Individuals should consult the regulations and administrative instructions for the programs covered under this subpart B for further information on the use of income information in determinations regarding eligibility.

§ 5.234 Requests for information from SWICAs and Federal agencies; restrictions on use.

(a) *Information available from SWICAs and Federal agencies—to whom and what.* Income information will generally be obtained through computer matching agreements between HUD and a SWICA or Federal agency, or between a PHA and a SWICA, as described in paragraph (c) of this section. Certification that the applicable assistance applicants and participants have signed appropriate consent forms and have received the necessary Privacy Act notice is required, as follows:

(1) When HUD requests the computer match, the processing entity shall certify to HUD; and

(2) When the PHA requests the computer match, the PHA shall certify to the SWICA.

(b) *Restrictions on use of information.* The restrictions of 42 U.S.C. 3544(c)(2)(A) apply to the use by HUD or a PHA of income information obtained from a SWICA. The restrictions of 42 U.S.C. 3544(c)(2)(A) and of 26 U.S.C. 6103(l)(7) apply to the use by HUD or a PHA of income information obtained from the IRS or SSA.

(c) *Computer matching agreements.* Computer matching agreements shall specify the purpose and the legal authority for the match, and shall include a description of the records to be matched, a statement regarding disposition of information generated through the match, a description of the administrative and technical safeguards to be used in protecting the information obtained through the match, a description of the use of records, the restrictions on duplication and redisclosure, a certification, and the amount that will be charged for processing a request.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2508-0008)

§ 5.236 Procedures for termination, denial, suspension, or reduction of assistance based on information obtained from a SWICA or Federal agency.

(a) *Termination, denial, suspension, or reduction of assistance.* The provisions of 42 U.S.C. 3544(c)(2)(B) and (C) shall govern the termination, denial, suspension, or reduction of benefits for an assistance applicant or participant based on income information obtained from a SWICA or a Federal agency. Procedures necessary to comply with these provisions are provided in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) *Procedures for independent verification.* (1) Any determination or redetermination of family income verified in accordance with this paragraph must be carried out in accordance with the requirements and procedures applicable to the individual covered program. Independent verification of information obtained from a SWICA or a Federal agency may be:

(i) By HUD;

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(ii) In the case of the public housing program, by a PHA; or

(iii) In the case of any Section 8 program, by a PHA acting as contract administrator under an ACC.

(2) Upon receiving income information from a SWICA or a Federal agency, HUD or, when applicable, the PHA shall compare the information with the information about a family's income that was:

(i) Provided by the assistance applicant or participant to the PHA; or

(ii) Obtained by the owner (or mortgagee, as applicable) from the assistance applicant or participant or from his or her employer.

(3) When the income information reveals an employer or other income source that was not disclosed by the assistance applicant or participant, or when the income information differs substantially from the information received from the assistance applicant or participant or from his or her employer:

(i) HUD or, as applicable or directed by HUD, the PHA shall request the undisclosed employer or other income source to furnish any information necessary to establish an assistance applicant's or participant's eligibility for or level of assistance in a covered program. This information shall be furnished in writing, as directed to:

(A) HUD, with respect to programs under parts 215, 221, 235, 236, or 290 of this title;

(B) The responsible entity (as defined in § 5.100) in the case of the public housing program or any Section 8 program.

(C) The owner or mortgagee, as applicable, with respect to the rent supplement, Section 221(d)(3) BMIR, Section 235 homeownership assistance, or Section 236 programs.

(ii) HUD or the PHA may verify the income information directly with an assistance applicant or participant. Such verification procedures shall not include any disclosure of income information prohibited under paragraph (b)(6) of this section.

(4) HUD and the PHA shall not be required to pursue these verification procedures when the sums of money at issue are too small to raise an inference of fraud or justify the expense of independent verification and the proce-

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dures related to termination, denial, suspension, or reduction of assistance.

(5) Based on the income information received from a SWICA or Federal agency, HUD or the PHA, as appropriate, may inform an owner (or mortgagee) that an assistance applicant's or participant's eligibility for or level of assistance is uncertain and needs to be verified. The owner (or mortgagee) shall then confirm the assistance applicant's or participant's income information by checking the accuracy of the information with the employer or other income source, or directly with the family.

(6) Nondisclosure of Income information. Neither HUD nor the PHA may disclose income information obtained from a SWICA directly to an owner (unless a PHA is the owner). Disclosure of income information obtained from the SSA or IRS is restricted under 26 U.S.C. § 6103(l)(7) and 42 U.S.C. 3544.

(c) *Opportunity to contest.* HUD, the PHA, or the owner (or mortgagee, as applicable) shall promptly notify any assistance applicant or participant in writing of any adverse findings made on the basis of the information verified in accordance with paragraph (b) of this section. The assistance applicant or participant may contest the findings in the same manner as applies to other information and findings relating to eligibility factors under the applicable program. Termination, denial, suspension, or reduction of assistance shall be carried out in accordance with requirements and procedures applicable to the individual covered program, and shall not occur until the expiration of any notice period provided by the statute or regulations governing the program.

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§ 5.238 Criminal and civil penalties.

Persons who violate the provisions of 42 U.S.C. 3544 or 26 U.S.C. 6103(l)(7) with respect to the use and disclosure of income information may be subject to civil or criminal penalties under 42 U.S.C. 3544(c)(3), 26 U.S.C. 7213(a), or 18 U.S.C. 1905.