

§ 4.28

(6) Legal activities, including litigation, if the disclosure is made to an attorney who is representing or is otherwise responsible to the Department in connection with the activities; or

(7) Procedures that are required to be performed to process an application, e.g., environmental or budget reviews, and technical assistance from experts in fields who are regularly employed by other government agencies, provided that the agency with which the expert is employed or associated is not an applicant for HUD assistance during the pending funding cycle.

(b) An authorized employee, during the selection process, may contact an applicant for the purpose of:

(1) Communication of the applicant's failure to qualify, after a preliminary review for eligibility and completeness with respect to his or her application, and the reasons for the failure to qualify, or the fact of the applicant's failure to be determined to be technically acceptable after a full review; or

(2) Clarification of the terms of the applicant's application. A clarification, for the purpose of this paragraph (b), may include a request for additional information consistent with regulatory requirements.

(c) Prohibition of advance disclosure of funding decisions. During the selection process an employee shall not knowingly disclose any covered selection information regarding the selection process to any person other than an employee authorized to receive that information.

(1) The following disclosures of information are, at any time during the selection process, a violation of Section 103:

(i) Information regarding any applicant's relative standing;

(ii) The amount of assistance requested by any applicant;

(iii) Any information contained in an application;

(2) The following disclosures of information, before the deadline for the submission of applications, shall be a violation of Section 103:

(i) The identity of any applicant; and

(ii) The number of applicants.

24 CFR Subtitle A (4-1-06 Edition)

§ 4.28 Civil penalties.

Whenever any employee knowingly and materially violates the prohibition in Section 103, the Department may impose a civil money penalty on the employee in accordance with the provisions of 24 CFR part 30.

§ 4.30 Procedure upon discovery of a violation.

(a) *In general.* When an alleged violation of Section 103 or this subpart B comes to the attention of any person, including an employee, he or she may either:

(1) Contact the HUD Ethics Law Division to provide information about the alleged violation; or

(2) Contact the HUD Office of Inspector General to request an inquiry or investigation into the matter.

(b) *Ethics Law Division.* When the Ethics Law Division receives information concerning an alleged violation of Section 103, it shall refer the matter to the Inspector General stating the facts of the alleged violation and requesting that the Inspector General make an inquiry or investigation into the matter.

(c) *Inspector General.* When the Inspector General receives information concerning an alleged violation of Section 103 or this subpart B, he or she shall notify the Ethics Law Division when the Inspector General begins an inquiry or investigation into the matter.

(d) *Protection of employee complaints.* (1) No official of the Ethics Law Division, after receipt of information from an employee stating the facts of an alleged violation of this part, shall disclose the identity of the employee without the consent of that employee. The Inspector General, after receipt of information stating the facts of an alleged violation of this part, shall not disclose the identity of the employee who provided the information without the consent of that employee, unless the Inspector General determines that disclosure of the employee's identity is unavoidable during the course of an investigation. However, any employee who knowingly reports a false alleged violation of this part is not so protected and may be subject to disciplinary action.

(2) Any employee who has authority to take, direct others to take, recommend or approve a personnel action is prohibited from threatening, taking, failing to take, recommending, or approving any personnel action as reprisal against another employee for providing information to investigating officials.

§ 4.32 Investigation by Office of Inspector General.

The Office of Inspector General shall review every alleged violation of Section 103. If after a review the Office of Inspector General determines that further investigation is not warranted, it shall notify the Ethics Law Division of that determination. If, after a review, the Office of Inspector General determines that additional investigation is warranted, it shall conduct the investigation and upon completion issue a report of the investigation to the Ethics Law Division as to each alleged violation.

§ 4.34 Review of Inspector General's report by the Ethics Law Division.

After receipt of the Inspector General's report, the Ethics Law Division shall review the facts and circumstances of the alleged violations. In addition, the Ethics Law Division may:

- (a) Return the report to the Inspector General with a request for further investigation;
- (b) Discuss the violation with the employee alleged to have committed the violation; or
- (c) Interview any other person, including employees who it believes will be helpful in furnishing information relevant to the inquiry.

§ 4.36 Action by the Ethics Law Division.

(a) After review of the Inspector General's report, the Ethics Law Division shall determine whether or not there is sufficient information providing a reasonable basis to believe that a violation of Section 103 or this subpart B has occurred.

(b) If the Ethics Law Division determines that there is no reasonable basis to believe that a violation of Section 103 or this subpart B has occurred, it

shall close the matter and send its determination to the Office of Inspector General.

(c) If the Ethics Law Division determines that there is sufficient information to provide a reasonable basis to believe that a violation of Section 103 or this subpart B has occurred, it shall:

- (1) Send its determination to the Office of Inspector General; and
- (2) Refer the matter to the appropriate official for review as to whether to impose a civil money penalty in accordance with 24 CFR part 30; provided, however, that the Ethics Law Division shall not make a civil money penalty recommendation unless it finds the violation to have been knowing and material. The decision to impose a civil money penalty in a particular matter may be made only upon referral from the Ethics Law Division.

(d) In determining whether a violation is material, the Ethics Law Division shall consider the following factors, as applicable:

- (1) The content of the disclosure and its significance to the person to whom the disclosure was made;
- (2) The time during the selection process when the disclosure was made;
- (3) The person to whom the disclosure was made;
- (4) The dollar amount of assistance requested by the person to whom the disclosure was made;
- (5) The dollar amount of assistance available for a given competition or program;
- (6) The benefit, if any, received or expected by the employee, the employee's relatives or friends, or any other person with whom the employee is affiliated;
- (7) The potential injury to the Department.

(e) If the Ethics Law Division determines that there is sufficient information to provide a reasonable basis to believe that a violation of Section 103 or this subpart B has occurred, it may, in addition to referring the matter under 24 CFR part 30, refer the matter to an appropriate HUD official for consideration of any other available disciplinary action. Any referral authorized by this paragraph (e) shall be reported to the Inspector General and