

or a decision based on documents in the probate package; and

(2) If they do not request a formal hearing, the probate case may be assigned to an attorney decision maker, who will convene an in-person informal hearing at a site convenient to most of the parties.

§ 15.302 What happens after the probate package is referred to OHA?

After OHA receives the probate package, it will assign the case to a deciding official, who will conduct the probate proceeding and issue a written decision or order in accordance with 43 CFR part 4, subpart D.

§ 15.303 What happens after the probate decision is made?

(a) We will not pay claims, transfer title to land, or distribute trust cash assets for 75 days after the final OHA decision or order is mailed to the interested parties.

(b) If an interested party files a timely request for de novo review, a request for rehearing, or an appeal in accordance with 43 CFR part 4, subpart D, we will not pay claims, transfer title to land, or distribute trust cash assets until the request or appeal is resolved.

(c) After 75 days, if no request for de novo review, request for rehearing, or appeal has been filed, or after any request or appeal has been resolved, the following actions will take place:

(1) The LTRO will change its land title records for the trust and restricted property in accordance with the final decision or order; and

(2) OST will pay claims and distribute the IIM account in accordance with the final decision or order.

Subpart E—Information and Records

§ 15.401 How can I find out the status of a probate?

You may request information about the status of an Indian probate from any BIA agency or regional office.

§ 15.402 Who owns the records associated with this part?

(a) Records are the property of the United States if they:

(1) Are made or received by a tribe or tribal organization in the conduct of a federal trust function under this part, including the operation of a trust program pursuant to Public Law 93–638 as amended; and

(2) Evidence the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities undertaken in the performance of a federal trust function under this part.

(b) Records are the property of the tribe if they are:

(1) Not covered by paragraph (a) of this section; and

(2) Are made or received by a tribe or tribal organization in the conduct of business with the Department of the Interior under this part.

§ 15.403 How must records associated with this part be preserved?

(a) Any organization, including tribes and tribal organizations, that has records identified in § 15.402(a):

(1) Must preserve the records in accordance with approved Departmental records retention procedures under the Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. Chapters 29, 31 and 33; and

(2) Is subject to inspection by the Secretary and the Archivist of the United States with respect to these records and related records management practices and safeguards required under the Federal Records Act.

(b) A tribe or tribal organization should preserve the records identified in § 15.402(b) for the period authorized by the Archivist of the United States for similar Department of the Interior records under 44 U.S.C. Chapter 33. If a tribe or tribal organization does not do so, it may be unable to adequately document essential transactions or furnish information necessary to protect its legal and financial rights or those of persons affected by its activities.

PART 16—ESTATES OF INDIANS OF THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301 (Interprets or applies Act of Apr. 26, 1906, ch. 1876, 34 Stat. 137, see 25 U.S.C. 355nt (1970); Act of May 27, 1908, ch. 199, 35 Stat. 312, see 25 U.S.C. 355nt (1970); Act of June 14, 1918, ch. 101, 40 Stat. 606, 25 U.S.C. 355, 375 (1970); Act of Apr. 12, 1926, ch. 115, 44 Stat. 239, see 25 U.S.C. 355nt (1970); Act of June 26, 1936, ch. 831, 49 Stat. 1967, 25 U.S.C. 501-509 (1970); Act of Aug. 4, 1947, ch. 458, 61 Stat. 731, 25 U.S.C. 502 (1970) and see 25 U.S.C. 355nt (1970); Act of Aug. 12, 1953, ch. 409, 67 Stat. 558, 25 U.S.C. 375c (1970) and see 25 U.S.C. 355nt (1970); Act of Aug. 11, 1955, ch. 786, 69 Stat. 666, see 25 U.S.C. 355nt (1970); Act of Aug. 29, 1967, Pub. L. 90-76, 81 Stat. 177, 25 U.S.C. 786-788 (1970); and Act of May 7, 1970, Pub. L. 91-240, 84 Stat. 203, 25 U.S.C. 375d (1970)).

SOURCE: 37 FR 7082, Apr. 8, 1972, unless otherwise noted.

§ 16.1 Definitions.

(a) The term *Secretary* means the Secretary of the Interior and his authorized representatives.

(b) The term *Bureau* means the Bureau of Indian Affairs, acting through the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and his authorized representatives, including field officials who are responsible for matters affecting properties in which a restricted interest is owned by an Indian of the Five Civilized Tribes.

(c) The term *Field Solicitor* means the Regional Solicitor, Southwest Region, Page Belcher Federal Building, P.O. Box 3156, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74101.

(d) The term *Indian of the Five Civilized Tribes* means an individual who is either an enrolled member of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, or Seminole Tribes of Oklahoma, or a descendant of an enrolled member thereof.

(e) The term *restricted interest* means an interest owned in real or personal property subject to restraints upon alienation imposed either by Federal statute or by administrative action authorized by Federal statute. Although this term includes property subject to restraints which may be removed by administrative action, its use in this part refers primarily to property sub-

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ject to restraints which State courts have jurisdiction to remove in proceedings such as those specified in § 16.2.

[37 FR 7082, Apr. 8, 1972, as amended at 50 FR 12529, Mar. 29, 1985]

§ 16.2 Scope of regulations.

The regulations in this part set forth procedures for discharging the responsibilities of the Secretary in connection with the performance by State courts, as authorized by Federal statutes, of certain functions which affect properties in which a restricted interest is owned by an Indian of the Five Civilized Tribes. These State court functions pertain to such proceedings as guardianship, heirship determination, will probate, estate administration, conveyance approval, partition of real property, confirmation of title to real property, and appeal from action removing or failing to remove restrictions against alienation. In addition, the regulations in this part set forth procedures for discharging certain other responsibilities of the Secretary not necessarily involving State court functions, such as escheat of estates of deceased Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes.

§ 16.3 Legal representation in State courts.

The statutory duties of the Secretary to furnish legal advice to any Indian of the Five Civilized Tribes, and to represent such Indian in State courts, in matters affecting a restricted interest owned by such Indian, shall be performed by attorneys on the staff of the Solicitor, under the supervision of the Field Solicitor. Such advice and representation shall be undertaken to the extent that the Field Solicitor in his discretion shall consider necessary to discharge said duties, with due regard to the complexity of the legal action contemplated, the availability of staff attorneys for such purposes, the value and extent of the restricted interests involved, possible conflicts between Indians claiming to be owners of such interests, the preference of such owners concerning legal representation, the financial resources available to such owners, the extent to which such owners require similar legal services in