

statewide workforce investment system, best suited to address the specific employment needs of an individual with a disability; and

(2) Provide the individual who is being referred—

(i) A notice of the referral by the designated State agency to the agency carrying out the program;

(ii) Information identifying a specific point of contact within the agency to which the individual is being referred; and

(iii) Information and advice regarding the most suitable services to assist the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

(d) *Order of selection.* In providing the information and referral services under this section to eligible individuals who are not in the priority category or categories to receive vocational rehabilitation services under the State's order of selection, the State unit must identify, as part of its reporting under section 101(a)(10) of the Act and §361.40, the number of eligible individuals who did not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services and did receive information and referral services under this section.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1820-0500)

(AUTHORITY: Sections 7(11), 12(c), 101(a)(5)(D), 101(a)(10)(C)(ii), and 101(a)(20) of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 709(c), 721(a)(5)(D), 721(a)(10)(C)(ii), and 721(a)(20))

[66 FR 4382, Jan. 17, 2001, as amended at 66 FR 7253, Jan. 22, 2001]

**§361.38 Protection, use, and release of personal information.**

(a) *General provisions.* (1) The State agency and the State unit must adopt and implement written policies and procedures to safeguard the confidentiality of all personal information, including photographs and lists of names. These policies and procedures must ensure that—

(i) Specific safeguards are established to protect current and stored personal information;

(ii) All applicants and eligible individuals and, as appropriate, those individuals' representatives, service providers, cooperating agencies, and interested persons are informed through ap-

propriate modes of communication of the confidentiality of personal information and the conditions for accessing and releasing this information;

(iii) All applicants or their representatives are informed about the State unit's need to collect personal information and the policies governing its use, including—

(A) Identification of the authority under which information is collected;

(B) Explanation of the principal purposes for which the State unit intends to use or release the information;

(C) Explanation of whether providing requested information to the State unit is mandatory or voluntary and the effects of not providing requested information;

(D) Identification of those situations in which the State unit requires or does not require informed written consent of the individual before information may be released; and

(E) Identification of other agencies to which information is routinely released;

(iv) An explanation of State policies and procedures affecting personal information will be provided to each individual in that individual's native language or through the appropriate mode of communication; and

(v) These policies and procedures provide no fewer protections for individuals than State laws and regulations.

(2) The State unit may establish reasonable fees to cover extraordinary costs of duplicating records or making extensive searches and must establish policies and procedures governing access to records.

(b) *State program use.* All personal information in the possession of the State agency or the designated State unit must be used only for the purposes directly connected with the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program. Information containing identifiable personal information may not be shared with advisory or other bodies that do not have official responsibility for administration of the program. In the administration of the program, the State unit may obtain personal information from service providers and cooperating agencies under assurances that the information may not be further divulged, except as provided under

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paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of this section.

(c) *Release to applicants and eligible individuals.* (1) Except as provided in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section, if requested in writing by an applicant or eligible individual, the State unit must make all requested information in that individual's record of services accessible to and must release the information to the individual or the individual's representative in a timely manner.

(2) Medical, psychological, or other information that the State unit determines may be harmful to the individual may not be released directly to the individual, but must be provided to the individual through a third party chosen by the individual, which may include, among others, an advocate, a family member, or a qualified medical or mental health professional, unless a representative has been appointed by a court to represent the individual, in which case the information must be released to the court-appointed representative.

(3) If personal information has been obtained from another agency or organization, it may be released only by, or under the conditions established by, the other agency or organization.

(4) An applicant or eligible individual who believes that information in the individual's record of services is inaccurate or misleading may request that the designated State unit amend the information. If the information is not amended, the request for an amendment must be documented in the record of services, consistent with § 361.47(a)(12).

(d) *Release for audit, evaluation, and research.* Personal information may be released to an organization, agency, or individual engaged in audit, evaluation, or research only for purposes directly connected with the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program or for purposes that would significantly improve the quality of life for applicants and eligible individuals and only if the organization, agency, or individual assures that—

(1) The information will be used only for the purposes for which it is being provided;

(2) The information will be released only to persons officially connected with the audit, evaluation, or research;

(3) The information will not be released to the involved individual;

(4) The information will be managed in a manner to safeguard confidentiality; and

(5) The final product will not reveal any personal identifying information without the informed written consent of the involved individual or the individual's representative.

(e) *Release to other programs or authorities.* (1) Upon receiving the informed written consent of the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative, the State unit may release personal information to another agency or organization for its program purposes only to the extent that the information may be released to the involved individual or the individual's representative and only to the extent that the other agency or organization demonstrates that the information requested is necessary for its program.

(2) Medical or psychological information that the State unit determines may be harmful to the individual may be released if the other agency or organization assures the State unit that the information will be used only for the purpose for which it is being provided and will not be further released to the individual.

(3) The State unit must release personal information if required by Federal law or regulations.

(4) The State unit must release personal information in response to investigations in connection with law enforcement, fraud, or abuse, unless expressly prohibited by Federal or State laws or regulations, and in response to an order issued by a judge, magistrate, or other authorized judicial officer.

(5) The State unit also may release personal information in order to protect the individual or others if the individual poses a threat to his or her safety or to the safety of others.

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(Authority: Sections 12(c) and 101(a)(6)(A) of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 709(c) and 721(a)(6)(A))

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**§ 361.39 State-imposed requirements.**

The designated State unit must, upon request, identify those regulations and policies relating to the administration or operation of its vocational rehabilitation program that are State-imposed, including any regulations or policy based on State interpretation of any Federal law, regulations, or guideline.

(Authority: Section 17 of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 714)

**§ 361.40 Reports.**

(a) The State plan must assure that the designated State agency will submit reports, including reports required under sections 13, 14, and 101(a)(10) of the Act—

(1) In the form and level of detail and at the time required by the Secretary regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under this part; and

(2) In a manner that provides a complete count (other than the information obtained through sampling consistent with section 101(a)(10)(E) of the Act) of the applicants and eligible individuals to—

(i) Permit the greatest possible cross-classification of data; and

(ii) Protect the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

(b) The designated State agency must comply with any requirements necessary to ensure the accuracy and verification of those reports.

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(Authority: Section 101(a)(10)(A) and (F) of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 721(a)(10)(A) and (F))

[66 FR 4382, Jan. 17, 2001, as amended at 66 FR 7253, Jan. 22, 2001]

PROVISION AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

**§ 361.41 Processing referrals and applications.**

(a) *Referrals.* The designated State unit must establish and implement standards for the prompt and equitable handling of referrals of individuals for vocational rehabilitation services, including referrals of individuals made through the One-Stop service delivery systems established under section 121 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The standards must include timelines for making good faith efforts to inform these individuals of application requirements and to gather information necessary to initiate an assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services.

(b) *Applications.* (1) Once an individual has submitted an application for vocational rehabilitation services, including applications made through common intake procedures in One-Stop centers established under section 121 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, an eligibility determination must be made within 60 days, unless—

(i) Exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the designated State unit preclude making an eligibility determination within 60 days and the designated State unit and the individual agree to a specific extension of time; or

(ii) An exploration of the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in work situations is carried out in accordance with § 361.42(e) or, if appropriate, an extended evaluation is carried out in accordance with § 361.42(f).

(2) An individual is considered to have submitted an application when the individual or the individual's representative, as appropriate—

(i)(A) Has completed and signed an agency application form;

(B) Has completed a common intake application form in a One-Stop center requesting vocational rehabilitation services; or

(C) Has otherwise requested services from the designated State unit;

(ii) Has provided to the designated State unit information necessary to initiate an assessment to determine