

Department of Veterans Affairs

§ 1.496

(2) There is a reasonable likelihood that the records will disclose information of substantial value in the investigation or prosecution.

(3) Other ways of obtaining the information are not available or would not be effective.

(4) The potential injury to the patient, to the physician-patient relationship and to the ability of VA to provide services to other patients is outweighed by the public interest and the need for the disclosure.

(5) If the applicant is a person performing a law enforcement function, VA has been represented by counsel independent of the applicant.

(e) *Content of order.* Any order authorizing a disclosure or use of patient records under this section must:

(1) Limit disclosure and use to those parts of the patient's record which are essential to fulfill the objective of the order;

(2) Limit disclosure to those law enforcement and prosecutorial officials who are responsible for, or are conducting, the investigation or prosecution, and limit their use of the records to investigation and prosecution of extremely serious crime or suspected crime specified in the applications; and

(3) Include such other measures as are necessary to limit disclosure and use to the fulfillment on only that public interest and need found by the court.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7332(c))

§ 1.495 Procedures and criteria for orders authorizing disclosure and use of records to investigate or prosecute VA or employees of VA.

(a) *Application.* (1) An order authorizing the disclosure or use of patient records covered by §§ 1.460 through 1.499 of this part to criminally or administratively investigate or prosecute VA (or employees or agents of VA) may be applied for by an administrative, regulatory, supervisory, investigative, law enforcement, or prosecutorial agency having jurisdiction over VA activities.

(2) The application may be filed separately or as part of a pending civil or criminal action against VA (or agents or employees of VA) in which it appears that the patient records are needed to provide material evidence. The

application must use a fictitious name, such as John Doe, to refer to any patient and may not contain or otherwise disclose any patient identifying information unless the court has ordered the record of the proceeding sealed from public scrutiny or the patient has given a written consent (meeting the requirements of § 1.475 of this part) to that disclosure.

(b) *Notice not required.* An application under this section may, in the discretion of the court, be granted without notice. Although no express notice is required to VA or to any patient whose records are to be disclosed, upon implementation of an order so granted VA or the patient must be afforded an opportunity to seek revocation or amendment of that order, limited to the presentation of evidence on the statutory and regulatory criteria for the issuance of the court order.

(c) *Requirements for order.* An order under this section must be entered in accordance with, and comply with the requirements of, § 1.493(d) and (e) of this part.

(d) *Limitations on disclosure and use of patient identifying information.* (1) An order entered under this section must require the deletion of patient identifying information from any documents made available to the public.

(2) No information obtained under this section may be used to conduct any investigation or prosecution of a patient, or be used as the basis for an application for an order under § 1.494 of this part.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7334)

§ 1.496 Orders authorizing the use of undercover agents and informants to criminally investigate employees or agents of VA.

(a) *Application.* A court order authorizing the placement of an undercover agent or informant in a VA drug or alcohol abuse, HIV infection, or sickle cell anemia treatment program as an employee or patient may be applied for by any law enforcement or prosecutorial agency which has reason to believe that employees or agents of the VA treatment program are engaged in criminal misconduct.

(b) *Notice.* The VA facility director must be given adequate notice of the