

1979. A complainant shall file a complaint within 180 days from the date the complainant first had knowledge of the alleged act of discrimination. However, for good cause shown, VA may extend this time limit. Complaints may be submitted to the Director, Office of Equal Opportunity (06B), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420.

(b) VA will attempt to facilitate the filing of complaints wherever possible, including taking the following measures:

(1) Acknowledging receipt and acceptance of a complaint in writing.

(2) Accepting as a sufficient complaint, any written statement which identifies the parties involved and the date the complainant first had knowledge of the alleged violation, describes generally the action or practice complained of, and is signed by the complainant.

(3) Freely permitting a complainant to add information to the complaint to meet the requirements of a sufficient complaint.

(4) Widely disseminating information regarding the obligations of recipients under the Act and these regulations.

(5) Notifying the complainant and the recipient of their rights and obligations under the complaint procedure, including the right to have a representative at all stages of the complaint procedure.

(6) Notifying the complainant and the recipient (or their representatives) of their right to contact VA for information and assistance regarding the complaint resolution process.

(c) VA will refer a complaint of discrimination based on age to another appropriate Federal agency when the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of VA. VA will notify the complainant in writing that the complaint has been referred; explain the reason why the complaint is not within the jurisdiction of VA; and give the complainant the name, agency, and address of the official to whom the complaint was referred.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 6101-6107)

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900-0401)

§ 18.543 Mediation.

(a) Referral of complaints for mediation. VA will refer to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service all complaints that:

(1) Fall within the jurisdiction of the Act and these regulations; and

(2) Contain all information necessary for further processing.

(b) Both the complainant and the recipient shall participate in the mediation process to the extent necessary to reach an agreement or make an informed judgment that an agreement is not possible. However, the recipient and the complainant need not meet with the mediator at the same time.

(c) If the complainant and the recipient reach an agreement, the mediator shall prepare a written statement of the agreement and have the complainant and the recipient sign it. The mediator shall send a copy of the agreement to VA. VA will take no further action on the complaint unless the complainant or the recipient fails to comply with the agreement.

(d) The mediator shall protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of the mediation process. No mediator shall testify in any adjunctive proceeding, produce any document, or otherwise disclose any information obtained in the course of the mediation process without prior approval of the head of the mediation agency.

(e) VA will use the mediation process for a maximum of 60 days after the responsible agency official receives a complaint.

(f) Mediation ends if:

(1) 60 days elapse from the time the responsible agency official receives the complaint; or

(2) Prior to the end of that 60-day period, an agreement is reached; or

(3) Prior to the end of that 60-day period, the mediator determines that an agreement cannot be reached.

(g) The mediator shall return unresolved complaints to VA.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 6101-6107)