

# 7 FAM 500 FEDERAL BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS ABROAD AND SERVICES FOR OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

## 7 FAM 510 INTRODUCTION

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*  
*(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)*

## 7 FAM 511 SUMMARY

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

- a. Chapter 500 covers services provided to Federal benefits paying-agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs (*DVA*), the Department of Labor (*DOL*), the Social Security Administration (*SSA*), the Office of Personnel Management (*OPM*), and the Railroad Retirement Board (*RRR*). The Department through its posts abroad represents these agencies and acts as an intermediary for them by providing information and guidance about their programs and services, and by assisting them in facilitating claims processing and ultimately the payment of benefits to U.S. citizens and other citizens living abroad.
- b. Chapter 500 also covers the programs and services the Department of State provides for other Federal agencies such as the Department of the Treasury including the Internal Revenue Service (*IRS*) and the Bureau of the Public Debt, and the Selective Service System (*SSS*). Most of these services assist U.S. citizens in fulfilling responsibilities they have to the U. S. Government.

### **Services and Benefits Provided Abroad Annually**

#### **SSA (Social Security Administration)**

- *467,492* beneficiaries *living abroad*
- *\$2.7 billion dollars* in payments *abroad annually*

- 42,000 Social Security cards *issues*

**DVA (Department of Veterans Affairs)**

- 18,000 actions (e.g., applications, payments and appointments)

**OPM (Office of Personnel Management)**

- 26,000 beneficiaries
- \$20 million in annuity payments

## **7 FAM 512 OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY SERVICES**

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

Other services such as extradition, *prisoner transfer*, judicial assistance, and abduction are not covered in this chapter. Rather they are covered in the chapters specific to those functions or services to U.S. citizens abroad.

- (1) 7 FAM 1600 – Extradition;*
- (2) 7 FAM 480 – Prisoner Transfer;*
- (3) 7 FAM 900 – Judicial Assistance;*
- (4) 7 FAM 1710 – Parental Child Abduction;*
- (5) 7 FAM 1820 – Hostage Taking and Kidnapping; and*
- (6) 7 FAM 1500 – Overseas Voting Program.*

## **7 FAM 513 WHY DO CONSULAR OFFICERS PERFORM THESE SERVICES?**

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

- a. It is important to stress the significance of the work done in a Federal Benefits Unit and how vital it is to the well being of U.S. citizens and other citizens who receive Federal benefits abroad or who need to comply with obligations to the U.S. Government from abroad. Many of these individuals are reliant on the funds that you process for their livelihood and it is therefore imperative that you fulfill your responsibilities in a dedicated and conscientious manner.
- b. Performing these responsibilities on behalf of other Federal government agencies is part of the Department’s mission to protect U.S. citizens abroad. Through the Interagency Council for Administrative Support Services (ICASS) reimbursement for these services is provided by the respective agencies.

## 7 FAM 514 ROLE OF THE CONSULAR OFFICER

(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)

- a. Federal law mandates entitlements to certain Federal benefits. Each Federal benefits-paying agency establishes policies and procedures under which the laws are implemented. When policies and procedures are applied outside the United States, your assistance is required.
- b. Your job is to act as an intermediary between individuals (U.S. citizens and other citizens) living abroad and the following Federal agencies for whom services are rendered on their behalf. Each of the following agencies has been assigned a section within 7 FAM 500 elaborating on its programs and your role in the implementation of them.
  - (1) Department of the Treasury (7 FAM 520);
  - (2) Social Security Administration (7 FAM 530);
  - (3) Department of Veterans Affairs (7 FAM 540);
  - (4) Selective Service System (7 FAM 550);
  - (5) Department of Labor (7 FAM 560);
  - (6) Railroad Retirement Board (7 FAM 570); *and*
  - (7) Office of Personnel Management (7 FAM 580).

## 7 FAM 515 ROLE OF CA/OCS/PRI

(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)

- a. The Office of Policy Review and Interagency Liaison *in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, Directorate of Overseas Citizens Services (CA/OCS/PRI)* is the Department's liaison with other benefits-paying agencies, consular posts abroad and members of the public and Congress. *CA/OCS/PRI* provides guidance, disseminates information and implements new programs and procedures of the other agencies.
- b. In essence, *CA/OCS/PRI* shares the administrative and managerial responsibilities with other Federal benefits-paying agencies for the Federal Benefits Programs abroad to ensure efficient and fraud-free payment of benefits as well as the provision of services. *OCS/PRI* works to ensure that services provided for other agencies are administered in an efficient and effective way delivering a high quality service.
- c. *CA/OCS/PRI* has *a collective email address* ASKPRI@state.gov, where you may send questions and be assured that the appropriate person gets your question and responds as soon as possible. We encourage you to submit complex case examples to ASKPRI@state.gov so *PRI* can share them with other posts for advice/suggestions or for their information.

## 7 FAM 516 SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

*This chapter of the 7 FAM addresses:*

- (1) The authorities under which these programs and services operate and how you can access them;
- (2) How the claim/request should be received and processed including web sites for information and forms;
- (3) The eligibility requirements and information necessary to submit a claim/request and where to send it or how to submit them electronically;
- (4) Agency contact lists that will be kept current electronically;
- (5) How benefits and services are actually provided and/or paid, and when necessary how to terminate them; and
- (6) What to do when checks are lost or stolen and how to provide replacements.

## 7 FAM 517 AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

*Consular authority to assist federal agencies is derived from:*

**22 U.S.C. 3904 Functions of Service (Subparagraph 3) *which states* Members of the Service shall, under the direction of the Secretary:**

**(3) Perform functions on behalf of any agency or other Government establishment (including any establishment in the legislative or judicial branch) requiring their services."**

## 7 FAM 518 DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION (PRIVACY ACT)

### 7 FAM 518.1 How Should Requests for Information be Handled?

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

- a. Federal agencies must protect an individual's right to privacy when they

collect personal information. Disclosure of information from name-retrievable systems of records is subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act (*PA*), as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a). With certain exceptions, the *PA* prohibits release of such information without the written consent of the individual to whom it pertains. Also see the *Department of State* listing of systems of records subject to the *PA* (Privacy Act Issuances) especially State-05, Overseas Citizens Services Records. Because the *PA* provides civil and even criminal penalties for violations, you should contact CA/OCS/PRI if you have any questions whether the release of information is consistent with the law.

- b. Requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act (*FOIA*), as amended (5 U.S.C. 552), should be referred to the Department (A/ISS/IPS/RL) under 22 CFR 171 or, if the information requested belongs to another Federal agency, to that agency (see 7 FAM 518.2, Requests for Information from Other Federal Agencies' Records). When the records contain "privileged information, i.e., medical diagnosis/evaluations," consult the Federal agency concerned and/or the Department regarding disclosure. (See *7 FAM 060 and the CA/OCS Intranet Privacy Act Feature*).

## **7 FAM 518.2 Requests for Information from other Federal Agencies' Records**

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

- a. If an individual or a foreign government official requests information from the records of another government agency, you should tell him/her to send a written request directly to the agency concerned unless that agency has already authorized you in writing to release the information.
- b. Your Regional Federal Benefits Officer (*RFBO*) may also be able to provide assistance more readily when the information is necessary to adjudicate and determine an individual's entitlement to rights and benefits, or obligations owed to the foreign agency.

## **7 FAM 519 WHAT YOU SHOULD DO TO PREVENT FRAUD**

*(CT:CON-167; 05-10-2007)*

- a. Federal benefits and services abroad are as vulnerable to fraudulent activity as any other consular service and consular officers must apply the same high standard used in resolving a claim to U.S. nationality or eligibility for a visa to processing Federal benefits and services for other agencies.

**See:**

- *7 FAH-1 H-900 Consular Fraud Prevention*
- *7 FAH-1 Management Controls, Anti-Fraud and Malfeasance*

b. CA's Office of Fraud Prevention Programs (CA/FPP) is responsible for formulating policies and programs related to passport, visa, and other consular anti-fraud practices.

- (1) Consult CA/FPP for guidance as needed. *(See also the CA/FPP Intranet page.)*
- (2) Report fraud trends to CA/FPP as well as to the Federal agency concerned.
- (3) Report directly to the interested agency, *or to the Department of State (DOS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Hotline (DOS IG Hotline)*, any suspected fraud concerning eligibility or continued eligibility for benefits.