

is completed throughout the period of obligated service specified in the agreement.

(d)(1) A bonus paid to any individual under this section shall be in addition to any pay or allowance to which the individual is entitled.

(2) The amount of a bonus paid under this section shall not be considered to be basic pay for the purposes of sections 5551, 5552, and 5595 of title 5, chapters 81, 83, 84, and 87 of such title, or any other provision of law creating an entitlement to benefits based on basic pay.

(e) At least once each year the Secretary, upon the recommendation of the Under Secretary for Health, shall determine the specific health-care facilities and clinical services, if any, as to which there are significant problems with respect to the recruitment and retention of registered nurses. Upon making any such determination, the Secretary shall promptly notify the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the determination and the basis for the determination.

(f) The Secretary may enter into agreements under this section with individuals in a health profession other than nursing (and other than a health profession for which special pay may be provided under subchapter III) if the Secretary determines that there are significant problems with respect to recruitment and retention of employees in that health profession. The Secretary's authority to enter into any such agreement under this section, and such agreement, shall be subject to the provisions of this section in the same manner as are the authority to enter into an agreement under this section with a registered nurse and such an agreement.

(g)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, an individual who voluntarily, or because of misconduct, fails to perform services as assigned by the Secretary for the period of obligated service provided in an agreement under this section shall refund to the United States the amount by which the total amount of bonus payments received by that individual under this section exceeds the amount that such individual would have received under an agreement under this section to serve for the period of obligated service actually served (as determined at the time the agreement is entered into). If the period actually served is less than two years, the amount to be refunded is the entire amount paid to the individual.

(2) An individual shall not be required to make a refund under paragraph (1) of this subsection if the Secretary determines, in accordance with regulations prescribed under subsection (h) of this section, that the individual's failure to perform services for the period of obligated service is due to circumstances (not including separation for cause) beyond the control of the individual.

(3) An obligation to refund any portion of a bonus payment under this subsection is, for all purposes, a debt owed to the United States.

(4) The provisions of this subsection and the specific amounts that the individual could be required to refund shall be disclosed to the individual at the time the agreement is entered into and shall be clearly set forth in the contract.

(h) The Secretary shall prescribe regulations to carry out this section.

(Added Pub. L. 100-322, title II, §212(a)[(1)], May 20, 1988, 102 Stat. 514, §4120; renumbered §7458 and amended Pub. L. 102-40, title IV, §401(c)(4), May 7, 1991, 105 Stat. 238; Pub. L. 102-83, §4(a)(3), (4), (b)(1), (2)(E), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 404, 405; Pub. L. 102-405, title III, §302(c)(1), Oct. 9, 1992, 106 Stat. 1984; Pub. L. 103-446, title XII, §1201(h)(4), Nov. 2, 1994, 108 Stat. 4688; Pub. L. 110-387, title IX, §901(a)(6), Oct. 10, 2008, 122 Stat. 4142.)

#### AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 110-387 substituted "prorated" for "pro rated".

1994—Pub. L. 103-446 substituted "Recruitment and retention bonus pay" for "Recruitment and retention bonus pay for nurses and certain other health-care personnel" as section catchline.

1992—Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 102-405 substituted "Under Secretary for Health" for "Chief Medical Director".

1991—Pub. L. 102-40 renumbered section 4120 of this title as this section.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 102-83, §4(b)(1), (2)(E), substituted "Secretary" for "Administrator" wherever appearing.

Pub. L. 102-83, §4(a)(3), (4), substituted "Department" for "Veterans' Administration" wherever appearing.

Subsecs. (b)(1), (c)(2), (e). Pub. L. 102-83, §4(b)(1), (2)(E), substituted "Secretary" for "Administrator" wherever appearing.

Subsec. (f). Pub. L. 102-83, §4(b)(1), (2)(E), substituted "Secretary" for "Administrator" in two places and "Secretary's" for "Administrator's".

Pub. L. 102-40 substituted "subchapter III" for "section 4118 of this title".

Subsecs. (g)(1), (2), (h). Pub. L. 102-83, §4(b)(1), (2)(E), substituted "Secretary" for "Administrator".

#### SUBCHAPTER V—DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

##### § 7461. Adverse actions: section 7401(1) employees

(a) Whenever the Under Secretary for Health (or an official designated by the Under Secretary for Health) brings charges based on conduct or performance against a section 7401(1) employee and as a result of those charges an adverse personnel action is taken against the employee, the employee shall have the right to appeal the action.

(b)(1) If the case involves or includes a question of professional conduct or competence in which a major adverse action was taken, such an appeal shall be made to a Disciplinary Appeals Board under section 7462 of this title.

(2) In any other case, such an appeal shall be made—

(A) through Department grievance procedures under section 7463 of this title, in any case that involves or includes a question of professional conduct or competence in which a major adverse action was not taken or in any case of an employee who is not covered by a collective bargaining agreement under chapter 71 of title 5; or

(B) through grievance procedures provided through collective bargaining under chapter 71 of title 5 or through Department grievance procedures under section 7463 of this title, as the employee elects, in the case of an employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement under chapter 71 of title 5 that does not involve or include a question of professional conduct or competence.

(c) For purposes of this subchapter—

(1) Section 7401(1) employees are employees of the Department employed on a full-time basis under a permanent appointment in a position listed in section 7401(1) of this title (other than interns and residents appointed pursuant to section 7406 of this title).

(2) A major adverse action is an adverse action which includes any of the following:

- (A) Suspension.
- (B) Transfer.
- (C) Reduction in grade.
- (D) Reduction in basic pay.
- (E) Discharge.

(3) A question of professional conduct or competence is a question involving any of the following:

- (A) Direct patient care.
- (B) Clinical competence.

(d) An issue of whether a matter or question concerns, or arises out of, professional conduct or competence is not itself subject to any grievance procedure provided by law, regulation, or collective bargaining and may not be reviewed by any other agency.

(e) Whenever the Secretary proposes to prescribe regulations under this subchapter, the Secretary shall publish the proposed regulations in the Federal Register for notice-and-comment not less than 30 days before the day on which they take effect.

(Added Pub. L. 102-40, title II, §203(a), May 7, 1991, 105 Stat. 202; amended Pub. L. 102-405, title III, §302(c)(1), Oct. 9, 1992, 106 Stat. 1984.)

#### PRIOR PROVISIONS

Provisions similar to those in this subchapter were contained in section 4110 of this title prior to the repeal of that section as part of the complete revision of chapter 73 of this title by Pub. L. 102-40.

#### AMENDMENTS

1992—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 102-405 substituted “Under Secretary for Health” for “Chief Medical Director” in two places.

#### REGULATIONS

Section 204 of Pub. L. 102-40 provided that: “The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall prescribe regulations under subchapter V of chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code (as added by section 203), not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [May 7, 1991]. Such regulations shall be published in the Federal Register for notice-and-comment not less than 30 days before the day on which they take effect.”

### § 7462. Major adverse actions involving professional conduct or competence

(a)(1) Disciplinary Appeals Boards appointed under section 7464 of this title shall have exclusive jurisdiction to review any case—

(A) which arises out of (or which includes) a question of professional conduct or competence of a section 7401(1) employee; and

(B) in which a major adverse action was taken.

(2) The board shall include in its record of decision in any mixed case a statement of the board's exclusive jurisdiction under this subsection and the basis for such exclusive jurisdiction.

(3) For purposes of paragraph (2), a mixed case is a case that includes both a major adverse action arising out of a question of professional conduct or competence and an adverse action which is not a major adverse action or which does not arise out of a question of professional conduct or competence.

(b)(1) In any case in which charges are brought against a section 7401(1) employee which arises out of, or includes, a question of professional conduct or competence which could result in a major adverse action, the employee is entitled to the following:

(A) At least 30 days advance written notice from the Under Secretary for Health or other charging official specifically stating the basis for each charge, the adverse actions that could be taken if the charges are sustained, and a statement of any specific law, regulation, policy, procedure, practice, or other specific instruction that has been violated with respect to each charge, except that the requirement for notification in advance may be waived if there is reasonable cause to believe that the employee has committed a crime for which the employee may be imprisoned.

(B) A reasonable time, but not less than seven days, to present an answer orally and in writing to the Under Secretary for Health or other deciding official, who shall be an official higher in rank than the charging official, and to submit affidavits and other documentary evidence in support of the answer.

(2) In any case described in paragraph (1), the employee is entitled to be represented by an attorney or other representative of the employee's choice at all stages of the case.

(3)(A) If a proposed adverse action covered by this section is not withdrawn, the deciding official shall render a decision in writing within 21 days of receipt by the deciding official of the employee's answer. The decision shall include a statement of the specific reasons for the decision with respect to each charge. If a major adverse action is imposed, the decision shall state whether any of the charges sustained arose out of a question of professional conduct or competence. If any of the charges are sustained, the notice of the decision to the employee shall include notice of the employee's rights of appeal.

(B) Notwithstanding the 21-day period specified in subparagraph (A), a proposed adverse action may be held in abeyance if the employee requests, and the deciding official agrees, that the employee shall seek counseling or treatment for a condition covered under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any such abeyance of a proposed action may not extend for more than one year.

(4)(A) The Secretary may require that any answer and submission under paragraph (1)(B) be submitted so as to be received within 30 days of the date of the written notice of the charges, except that the Secretary shall allow the granting of extensions for good cause shown.

(B) The Secretary shall require that any appeal to a Disciplinary Appeals Board from a decision to impose a major adverse action shall be received within 30 days after the date of service of the written decision on the employee.

(c)(1) When a Disciplinary Appeals Board convenes to consider an appeal in a case under this