

who is an alcoholic. Based on contacts with the doctor and beneficiary, we determine that Mr. X was hospitalized recently for his drinking. Paying him directly will cause injury, so we may delay payment for as long as one month based on substantial harm while we locate a suitable representative payee.

Example 2: Substantial Harm Does Not Exist. We approve a claim for Mr. Y, a title XVI claimant who suffers from a combination of mental impairments but who is not legally incompetent. We determine that Mr. Y needs assistance in managing benefits, but we have not found a representative payee. Although we believe that Mr. Y may not use the money wisely, there is no indication that receiving funds directly would cause him substantial harm (i.e., physical or mental injury). We must pay current benefits directly to Mr. Y while we locate a suitable representative payee.

(c) *How we pay delayed or suspended benefits.* Payment of benefits, which were delayed or suspended pending appointment of a representative payee, can be made to you or your representative payee as a single sum or in installments when we determine that installments are in your best interest.

17. Amend § 416.621 by revising the heading and paragraph (a) introductory text, redesignating paragraph (b) as paragraph (c) and adding new paragraph (b) to read as follows:

§ 416.621 What is our order of preference in selecting a representative payee for you?

* * * * *

(a) For beneficiaries 18 years old or older (except those described in paragraph (b) of this section), our preference is—

* * * * *

(b) For individuals who are disabled and who have a drug addiction or alcoholism condition our preference is—

(1) A community-based nonprofit social service agency licensed by the State, or bonded;

(2) A Federal, State or local government agency whose mission is to carry out income maintenance, social service, or health care-related activities;

(3) A State or local government agency with fiduciary responsibilities;

(4) A designee of an agency (other than a Federal agency) referred to in paragraphs (b)(1), (2), and (3) of this section, if appropriate; or

(5) A family member.

* * * * *

18. Add § 416.622 to read as follows:

§ 416.622 Who may not serve as a representative payee?

A representative payee applicant may not serve if he/she:

(a) Has been convicted of a violation under section 208, 811 or 1632 of the Social Security Act.

(b) Receives title II, VIII, or XVI benefits through a representative payee.

(c) Previously served as a representative payee and was found by us, or a court of competent jurisdiction, to have misused title II, VIII or XVI benefits. However, if we decide to make an exception to the prohibition, we must evaluate the payee's performance at least every 3 months until we are satisfied that the payee poses no risk to the beneficiary's best interest. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis if all of the following are true.

(1) Direct payment of benefits to the beneficiary is not in the beneficiary's interest.

(2) No suitable alternative payee is available.

(3) Selecting the payee applicant as representative payee would be in the best interest of the beneficiary.

(4) The information we have indicates the applicant is now suitable to serve as a representative payee.

(5) The payee applicant has repaid the misused benefits or has a plan to repay them.

(d) Applicant is a creditor. A creditor is someone who provides you with goods or services for consideration. This restriction does not apply to the creditor who poses no risk to you and whose financial relationship with you presents no substantial conflict of interest, and is any of the following:

(1) A relative living in the same household as you do.

(2) Your legal guardian or legal representative.

(3) A facility that is licensed or certified as a care facility under the law of a State or a political subdivision of a State.

(4) A qualified organization authorized to collect a monthly fee from you for expenses incurred in providing representative payee services for you, under § 416.640a.

(5) An administrator, owner, or employee of the facility in which you live and we are unable to locate an alternative representative payee.

(6) Any other individual we deem appropriate based on a written determination.

Example 1: Sharon applies to be representative payee for Ron who we have determined needs assistance in managing his benefits. Sharon has been renting a room to Ron for several years and assists Ron in handling his other financial obligations, as needed. She charges Ron a reasonable amount of rent. Ron has no other family or friends willing to help manage his benefits or to act as representative payee. Sharon has demonstrated that her interest in and concern for Ron goes beyond her desire to collect the rent each month. In this instance, we may select Sharon as Ron's representative payee

because a more suitable payee is not available, she appears to pose no risk to Ron and there is minimal conflict of interest. We will document this decision.

Example 2: In a situation similar to the one above, Ron's landlord indicates that she is applying to be payee only to ensure receipt of her rent. If there is money left after payment of the rent, she will give it directly to Ron to manage on his own. In this situation, we would not select the landlord as Ron's representative payee because of the substantial conflict of interest and lack of interest in his well being.

19. Add § 416.624 to read as follows:

§ 416.624 How do we investigate a representative payee applicant?

Before selecting an individual or organization to act as your representative payee, we will perform an investigation.

(a) *Nature of the investigation.* As part of the investigation, we do the following:

(1) Conduct a face-to-face interview with the payee applicant unless it is impracticable as explained in paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) Require the payee applicant to submit documented proof of identity, unless information establishing identity has recently been submitted with an application for title II, VIII or XVI benefits.

(3) Verify the payee applicant's Social Security account number or employer identification number.

(4) Determine whether the payee applicant has been convicted of a violation of section 208, 811 or 1632 of the Social Security Act.

(5) Determine whether the payee applicant has previously served as a representative payee and if they had an appointment as payee revoked or terminated for misusing title II, VIII or XVI benefits.

(6) Use our records to verify the payee applicant's employment and/or direct receipt of title II, VIII, or XVI benefits.

(7) Verify the payee applicant's concern for the beneficiary with the beneficiary's custodian or other interested person.

(8) Require the applicant to provide adequate information showing his or her relationship to the beneficiary and describe his or her responsibility for the care of the beneficiary.

(9) Determine whether the payee applicant is a creditor of the beneficiary (see § 416.622(d)).

(b) *A face-to-face interview.* We may consider a face-to-face interview impracticable if it would cause the payee applicant undue hardship. For example, the payee applicant cares for children or disabled individuals in the home and no alternative caregiver is