

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**24 CFR Part 3500**

[Docket No. FR-4023-F-01]

RIN 2502-AG69

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Housing—Federal Housing Commissioner; Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act; Streamlining Final Rule

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Housing-Federal Housing Commissioner, HUD.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule amends HUD's regulations under the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA). In an effort to comply with the President's regulatory reform initiatives, this rule streamlines the RESPA regulations by eliminating provisions that repeat statutes or are otherwise unnecessary. A number of the appendices that were intended to be illustrative, rather than regulatory, have been removed from codification, but will be made available by the Department as Public Guidance Documents. Therefore, this final rule makes the RESPA regulations clearer and more concise.

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 25, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David R. Williamson, Director, Office of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Room 5241, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20410, telephone number (202) 708-4560 (this is not a toll-free number); or for legal questions: Kenneth A. Markison, Assistant General Counsel for GSE/RESPA, or Grant E. Mitchell, Senior Attorney for RESPA, Room 9262, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20410, telephone number (202) 708-1550 (this is not a toll-free number). For hearing- or speech-impaired persons, this number may be accessed via TDD by calling the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 4, 1995, President Clinton issued a memorandum to all Federal departments and agencies regarding regulatory reinvention. In response to this memorandum, the Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted a page-by-page review of its regulations to determine which could be eliminated, consolidated, or otherwise improved. HUD has determined that the regulations for implementing RESPA

can be improved and streamlined by eliminating unnecessary provisions.

Several provisions in the regulations repeat statutory language from the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act of 1974, 12 U.S.C. 2601 *et seq.* It is unnecessary to maintain statutory requirements in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), since those requirements are otherwise fully accessible and binding. Furthermore, if regulations contain statutory language, HUD must amend the regulations whenever Congress amends the statute. Therefore, this final rule will remove repetitious statutory language and replace it with a citation to the specific statutory section for easy reference. For example, § 3500.19(a) has been substantially streamlined to delete provisions that simply repeated statutory provisions that do not need to be implemented by regulation.

This final rule also removes from codification several of the appendices that previously accompanied part 3500. The Department intends to preserve the material contained in the appendices to be removed, but will no longer codify that material. Instead, that material will be available as Public Guidance Documents, as defined in this rule. Although not codified, Public Guidance Documents have been or will be published in the Federal Register and any amendments to the documents will be published in the Federal Register, as well. In addition, the rule specifies that these documents are available from HUD at the address provided. The appendices being removed from codification are as follows:

- Appendix G—consisting of: (1) Appendix G-1 entitled "Initial Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Format," published at 60 FR 24736 (May 9, 1995); and (2) Appendix G-2 entitled "Initial Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example," published at 60 FR 8819 (Feb. 15, 1995), but amended at 60 FR 24735 (May 9, 1995).
- Appendix H—consisting of Appendix H-1 and Appendix H-2, each entitled "Biweekly Payments—Example," published at 60 FR 8820-8821 (Feb. 15, 1995).
- Appendix I—consisting of: (1) Appendices I-1, I-2, I-5, and I-6, each entitled "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Format," published at 60 FR 24737-24740 (May 9, 1995); and (2) Appendices I-3, I-4, I-7, and I-8, each entitled "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example," published at 60 FR 8824, 8825, 8828, and 8829 (Feb. 15, 1995).
- Appendix J—consisting of Appendices J-1 and J-2, each entitled

"Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example," published at 60 FR 8830-8831 (Feb. 15, 1995).

- Appendix K—consisting of Appendices K-1 through K-4, each entitled "Short Year Statements—Example," published at 60 FR 8832-8835 (Feb. 15, 1995).
- Appendix L—"Side-by-Side Presentation of Old Projection and History," published at 60 FR 8836 (Feb. 15, 1995).
- Appendix M—"Illustration of Option of Identifying Simultaneous Deficiency and Shortage," published at 60 FR 8837 (Feb. 15, 1995).
- Appendix N—"HUD-1 Aggregate Accounting Adjustment Example," published at 60 FR 8838 (Feb. 15, 1995).

Aside from having been published previously in the Federal Register as indicated above, these appendices were also published in the 1995 edition of the CFR (though after publication of the 1995 edition further revisions to Appendices G and I were made at 60 FR 24735-24740 (May 9, 1995)). While the guidance in these appendices remains applicable and the examples and explanations are very helpful to users, it is not necessary that it be published in the CFR. HUD will more appropriately provide this information through other public guidance materials rather than maintain it in the CFR. HUD may update this information from time to time by publication in the Federal Register. The information is also available from HUD at the address indicated in 24 CFR 3500.3.

The investigation provisions formerly at § 3500.20 previously were removed from this Part and consolidated in a new part 3800 with similar provisions for manufactured housing (part 3282) and interstate land sales (part 1720) (see FR-4026, a reinvention rule published shortly before this rule).

Justification for Final Rulemaking

HUD generally publishes a rule for public comment before issuing a rule for effect, in accordance with its own regulations on rulemaking in 24 CFR part 10. However, part 10 provides for exceptions to the general rule if the agency finds good cause to omit advance notice and public participation. The good cause requirement is satisfied when prior public procedure is "impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest" (24 CFR 10.1). HUD finds that good cause exists to publish this rule for effect without first soliciting public comment. This rule removes unnecessary regulatory provisions and nonbinding guidance material and corrects minor, nonsubstantive editorial errors in the

text of the current regulations. Because of the nature of the changes, prior public comment is unnecessary.

Other Matters

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Secretary, in accordance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 605(b)), has reviewed and approved this final rule, and in so doing certifies that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. This rule merely streamlines regulations by removing unnecessary provisions. The rule will have no adverse or disproportionate economic impact on small businesses.

Environmental Impact

This rulemaking does not have an environmental impact. This rulemaking simply amends an existing regulation by consolidating and streamlining provisions and does not alter the environmental effect of the regulations being amended. Findings of No Significant Impact with respect to the environment were made in accordance with HUD regulations in 24 CFR part 50 that implement section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332) at the time of development of regulations implementing RESPA. Those findings remain applicable to this rule, and are available for public inspection between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. weekdays in the Office of the Rules Docket Clerk, Office of General Counsel, Room 10276, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC.

Executive Order 12612, Federalism

The General Counsel, as the Designated Official under section 6(a) of Executive Order 12612, Federalism, has determined that this rule will not have substantial direct effects on States or their political subdivisions, or the relationship between the Federal government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. No programmatic or policy changes will result from this rule that would affect the relationship between the Federal Government and State and local governments.

Executive Order 12606, The Family

The General Counsel, as the Designated Official under Executive Order 12606, The Family, has determined that this rule will not have the potential for significant impact on family formation, maintenance, or general well-being, and thus is not

subject to review under the Order. No significant change in existing HUD policies or programs will result from promulgation of this rule.

List of Subjects in 24 CFR Part 3500

Consumer protection, Condominiums, Housing, Mortgages, Mortgage servicing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Accordingly, part 3500 of title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations is amended as follows:

PART 3500—REAL ESTATE SETTLEMENT PROCEDURES ACT

1. The authority citation for part 3500 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 12 U.S.C. 2601 *et seq.*; 42 U.S.C. 3535(d).

2. Sections 3500.1 through 3500.19 and 3500.21 are revised to read as follows:

§ 3500.1 Designation.

This part may be referred to as Regulation X.

§ 3500.2 Definitions.

(a) *Statutory terms.* All terms defined in RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602) are used in accordance with their statutory meaning unless otherwise defined in paragraph (b) of this section or elsewhere in this part.

(b) *Other terms.* As used in this part: *Application* means the submission of a borrower's financial information in anticipation of a credit decision, whether written or computer-generated, relating to a federally related mortgage loan. If the submission does not state or identify a specific property, the submission is an application for a pre-qualification and not an application for a federally related mortgage loan under this part. The subsequent addition of an identified property to the submission converts the submission to an application for a federally related mortgage loan.

Business day means a day on which the offices of the business entity are open to the public for carrying on substantially all of the entity's business functions.

Dealer means, in the case of property improvement loans, a seller, contractor, or supplier of goods or services. In the case of manufactured home loans, "dealer" means one who engages in the business of manufactured home retail sales.

Dealer loan or dealer consumer credit contract means, generally, any arrangement in which a dealer assists the borrower in obtaining a federally related mortgage loan from the funding

lender and then assigns the dealer's legal interests to the funding lender and receives the net proceeds of the loan. The funding lender is the lender for the purposes of the disclosure requirements of this part. If a dealer is a "creditor" as defined under the definition of "federally related mortgage loan" in this part, the dealer is the lender for purposes of this part.

Effective date of transfer is defined in section 6(i)(1) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2605(i)(1)). In the case of a home equity conversion mortgage or reverse mortgage as referenced in this section, the effective date of transfer is the transfer date agreed upon by the transferee servicer and the transferor servicer.

Federally related mortgage loan, also referred to in this rule as a "mortgage loan," is defined in section 3(1) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(1)). If the residential property securing a mortgage loan is not located in a State, it is not a federally related mortgage loan. A federally related mortgage loan also includes:

(1) Any loan (other than temporary financing such as a construction loan) which meets the requirements in section 3(1)(A) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(1)(A)) and which is either:

(i) Originated by a dealer or, if the obligation is to be assigned to any maker of mortgage loans specified in section 3(1)(B)(i)-(iv) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(1)(B)(i)-(iv)), by a mortgage broker; or

(ii) The subject of a home equity conversion mortgage, also frequently called a "reverse mortgage," issued by any maker of mortgage loans specified in section 3(1)(B)(i)-(iv) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(1)(B)(i)-(iv)).

(2) Any installment sales contract, land contract, or contract for deed on otherwise qualifying residential property is a federally related mortgage loan if the contract is funded in whole or in part by proceeds of a loan made by any maker of mortgage loans specified in section 3(1)(B)(i)-(iv) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(1)(B)(i)-(iv)).

Good faith estimate means an estimate, prepared in accordance with section 5 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2604), of charges that a borrower is likely to incur in connection with a settlement.

HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement (also *HUD-1 or HUD-1A*) means the statement that is prescribed by the Secretary in this part for setting forth settlement charges in connection with either the purchase or the refinancing (or other subordinate lien transaction) of 1- to 4-family residential property.

Lender means, generally, the secured creditor or creditors named in the debt obligation and document creating the lien. For loans originated by a mortgage broker that closes a federally related mortgage loan in its own name in a table funding transaction, the lender is the person to whom the obligation is initially assigned at or after settlement. A lender, in connection with dealer loans, is the lender to whom the loan is assigned, unless the dealer meets the definition of creditor as defined under "federally related mortgage loan" in this section. See also § 3500.5(b)(7), secondary market transactions.

Manufactured home is defined in § 3280.2 of this title.

Mortgage broker means a person (not an employee or exclusive agent of a lender) who brings a borrower and lender together to obtain a federally related mortgage loan, and who renders services as described in the definition of "settlement services" in this section. A loan correspondent meeting the requirements of the Federal Housing Administration under § 202.2(b) or § 202.15(a) of this title is a mortgage broker for purposes of this part.

Mortgaged property means the real property that is security for the federally related mortgage loan.

Person is defined in section 3(5) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(5)).

Public Guidance Documents means documents that HUD has published in the Federal Register, and that it may amend from time-to-time by publication in the Federal Register. These documents are also available from HUD at the address indicated in 24 CFR 3500.3.

Refinancing means a transaction in which an existing obligation that was subject to a secured lien on residential real property is satisfied and replaced by a new obligation undertaken by the same borrower and with the same or a new lender. The following shall not be treated as a refinancing, even when the existing obligation is satisfied and replaced by a new obligation with the same lender (this definition of "refinancing" as to transactions with the same lender is similar to Regulation Z, 12 CFR 226.20(a)):

(1) A renewal of a single payment obligation with no change in the original terms;

(2) A reduction in the annual percentage rate as computed under the Truth in Lending Act with a corresponding change in the payment schedule;

(3) An agreement involving a court proceeding;

(4) A workout agreement, in which a change in the payment schedule or

change in collateral requirements is agreed to as a result of the consumer's default or delinquency, unless the rate is increased or the new amount financed exceeds the unpaid balance plus earned finance charges and premiums for continuation of allowable insurance; and

(5) The renewal of optional insurance purchased by the consumer that is added to an existing transaction, if disclosures relating to the initial purchase were provided.

Regulation Z means the regulations issued by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (12 CFR part 226) to implement the Federal Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and includes the Commentary on Regulation Z.

Required use means a situation in which a person must use a particular provider of a settlement service in order to have access to some distinct service or property, and the person will pay for the settlement service of the particular provider or will pay a charge attributable, in whole or in part, to the settlement service. However, the offering of a package (or combination of settlement services) or the offering of discounts or rebates to consumers for the purchase of multiple settlement services does not constitute a required use. Any package or discount must be optional to the purchaser. The discount must be a true discount below the prices that are otherwise generally available, and must not be made up by higher costs elsewhere in the settlement process.

RESPA means the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act of 1974, 12 U.S.C. 2601 *et seq.*

Servicer means the person responsible for the servicing of a mortgage loan (including the person who makes or holds a mortgage loan if such person also services the mortgage loan). The term does not include:

(1) The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC), in connection with assets acquired, assigned, sold, or transferred pursuant to section 13(c) of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act or as receiver or conservator of an insured depository institution; and

(2) The Federal National Mortgage Corporation (FNMA); the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac); the RTC; the FDIC; HUD, including the Government National Mortgage Association (GNMA) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) (including cases in which a mortgage insured under the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) is assigned to HUD); the National Credit Union

Administration (NCUA); the Farmers Home Administration or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 (FmHA); and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in any case in which the assignment, sale, or transfer of the servicing of the mortgage loan is preceded by termination of the contract for servicing the loan for cause, commencement of proceedings for bankruptcy of the servicer, or commencement of proceedings by the FDIC or RTC for conservatorship or receivership of the servicer (or an entity by which the servicer is owned or controlled).

Servicing means receiving any scheduled periodic payments from a borrower pursuant to the terms of any mortgage loan, including amounts for escrow accounts under section 10 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2609), and making the payments to the owner of the loan or other third parties of principal and interest and such other payments with respect to the amounts received from the borrower as may be required pursuant to the terms of the mortgage servicing loan documents or servicing contract. In the case of a home equity conversion mortgage or reverse mortgage as referenced in this section, servicing includes making payments to the borrower.

Settlement means the process of executing legally binding documents regarding a lien on property that is subject to a federally related mortgage loan. This process may also be called "closing" or "escrow" in different jurisdictions.

Settlement service means any service provided in connection with a prospective or actual settlement, including, but not limited to, any one or more of the following:

(1) Origination of a federally related mortgage loan (including, but not limited to, the taking of loan applications, loan processing, and the underwriting and funding of such loans);

(2) Rendering of services by a mortgage broker (including counseling, taking of applications, obtaining verifications and appraisals, and other loan processing and origination services, and communicating with the borrower and lender);

(3) Provision of any services related to the origination, processing or funding of a federally related mortgage loan;

(4) Provision of title services, including title searches, title examinations, abstract preparation, insurability determinations, and the issuance of title commitments and title insurance policies;

- (5) Rendering of services by an attorney;
- (6) Preparation of documents, including notarization, delivery, and recordation;
- (7) Rendering of credit reports and appraisals;
- (8) Rendering of inspections, including inspections required by applicable law or any inspections required by the sales contract or mortgage documents prior to transfer of title;
- (9) Conducting of settlement by a settlement agent and any related services;
- (10) Provision of services involving mortgage insurance;
- (11) Provision of services involving hazard, flood, or other casualty insurance or homeowner's warranties;
- (12) Provision of services involving mortgage life, disability, or similar insurance designed to pay a mortgage loan upon disability or death of a borrower, but only if such insurance is required by the lender as a condition of the loan;
- (13) Provision of services involving real property taxes or any other assessments or charges on the real property;
- (14) Rendering of services by a real estate agent or real estate broker; and
- (15) Provision of any other services for which a settlement service provider requires a borrower or seller to pay.

Special information booklet means the booklet prepared by the Secretary pursuant to section 5 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2604) to help persons understand the nature and costs of settlement services. The Secretary publishes the form of the special information booklet in the Federal Register. The Secretary may issue or approve additional booklets or alternative booklets by publication of a Notice in the Federal Register.

State means any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and any territory or possession of the United States.

Table funding means a settlement at which a loan is funded by a contemporaneous advance of loan funds and an assignment of the loan to the person advancing the funds. A table-funded transaction is not a secondary market transaction (see § 3500.5(b)(7)).

Title company means any institution, or its duly authorized agent, that is qualified to issue title insurance.

§ 3500.3 Questions or suggestions from public and copies of public guidance documents.

Any questions or suggestions from the public regarding RESPA, or requests for

copies of HUD Public Guidance Documents, should be directed to the Director, Office of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW., Washington, DC 20410-8000, rather than to HUD field offices. Legal questions may be directed to the Assistant General Counsel, GSE/RESPA Division, at this address.

§ 3500.4 Reliance upon rule, regulation or interpretation by HUD.

(a) *Rule, regulation or interpretation.*—(1) For purposes of sections 19 (a) and (b) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2617 (a) and (b)) only the following constitute a rule, regulation or interpretation of the Secretary:

(i) All provisions, including appendices, of this part. Any other document referred to in this part is not incorporated in this part unless it is specifically set out in this part;

(ii) Any other document that is published in the Federal Register by the Secretary and states that it is an "interpretation," "interpretive rule," "commentary," or a "statement of policy" for purposes of section 19(a) of RESPA. Such documents will be prepared by HUD staff and counsel. Such documents may be revoked or amended by a subsequent document published in the Federal Register by the Secretary.

(2) A "rule, regulation, or interpretation thereof by the Secretary" for purposes of section 19(b) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2617(b)) shall not include the special information booklet prescribed by the Secretary or any other statement or issuance, whether oral or written, by an officer or representative of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), letter or memorandum by the Secretary, General Counsel, any Assistant Secretary or other officer or employee of HUD, preamble to a regulation or other issuance of HUD, Public Guidance Document, report to Congress, pleading, affidavit or other document in litigation, pamphlet, handbook, guide, telegraphic communication, explanation, instructions to forms, speech or other material of any nature which is not specifically included in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(b) *Unofficial interpretations; staff discretion.* In response to requests for interpretation of matters not adequately covered by this part or by an official interpretation issued under paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section, unofficial staff interpretations may be provided at the discretion of HUD staff or counsel. Written requests for such interpretations should be directed to the address

indicated in § 3500.3. Such interpretations provide no protection under section 19(b) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2617(b)). Ordinarily, staff or counsel will not issue unofficial interpretations on matters adequately covered by this Part or by official interpretations or commentaries issued under paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section.

(c) All informal counsel's opinions and staff interpretations issued before November 2, 1992, were withdrawn as of that date. Courts and administrative agencies, however, may use previous opinions to determine the validity of conduct under the previous Regulation X.

§ 3500.5 Coverage of RESPA.

(a) *Applicability.* RESPA and this part apply to all federally related mortgage loans, except for the exemptions provided in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) *Exemptions.* (1) A loan on property of 25 acres or more.

(2) *Business purpose loans.* An extension of credit primarily for a business, commercial, or agricultural purpose. The definition of such an extension of credit for purposes of this exemption generally parallels Regulation Z, 12 CFR 226.3(a)(1), and persons may rely on Regulation Z in determining whether the exemption applies. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the exemption in this section for business purpose loans does not include any loan to one or more persons acting in an individual capacity (natural persons) to acquire, refinance, improve, or maintain 1- to 4-family residential property used, or to be used, to rent to other persons. An individual who voluntarily chooses to act as a sole proprietorship is not considered to be acting in an individual capacity for purposes of this part.

(3) *Temporary financing.* Temporary financing, such as a construction loan. The exemption for temporary financing does not apply to a loan made to finance construction of 1- to 4-family residential property if the loan is used as, or may be converted to, permanent financing by the same lender or is used to finance transfer of title to the first user. If a lender issues a commitment for permanent financing, with or without conditions, the loan is covered by this part. Any construction loan for new or rehabilitated 1- to 4-family residential property, other than a loan to a *bona fide* builder (a person who regularly constructs 1- to 4-family residential structures for sale or lease), is subject to this part if its term is for two years or more. A "bridge loan" or "swing loan" in which a lender takes a security

interest in otherwise covered 1- to 4-family residential property is not covered by RESPA and this part.

(4) *Vacant land.* Any loan secured by vacant or unimproved property, unless within two years from the date of the settlement of the loan, a structure or a manufactured home will be constructed or placed on the real property using the loan proceeds. If a loan for a structure or manufactured home to be placed on vacant or unimproved property will be secured by a lien on that property, the transaction is covered by this part.

(5) *Assumption without lender approval.* Any assumption in which the lender does not have the right expressly to approve a subsequent person as the borrower on an existing federally related mortgage loan. Any assumption in which the lender's permission is both required and obtained is covered by RESPA and this part, whether or not the lender charges a fee for the assumption.

(6) *Loan conversions.* Any conversion of a federally related mortgage loan to different terms that are consistent with provisions of the original mortgage instrument, as long as a new note is not required, even if the lender charges an additional fee for the conversion.

(7) *Secondary market transactions.* A *bona fide* transfer of a loan obligation in the secondary market is not covered by RESPA and this part, except as set forth in section 6 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2605) and § 3500.21. In determining what constitutes a *bona fide* transfer, HUD will consider the real source of funding and the real interest of the funding lender. Mortgage broker transactions that are table-funded are not secondary market transactions. Neither the creation of a dealer loan or dealer consumer credit contract, nor the first assignment of such loan or contract to a lender, is a secondary market transaction (see § 3500.2.)

§ 3500.6 Special information booklet at time of loan application.

(a) *Lender to provide special information booklet.* Subject to the exceptions set forth in this paragraph, the lender shall provide a copy of the special information booklet to a person from whom the lender receives, or for whom the lender prepares, a written application for a federally related mortgage loan. When two or more persons apply together for a loan, the lender is in compliance if the lender provides a copy of the booklet to one of the persons applying.

(1) The lender shall provide the special information booklet by delivering it or placing it in the mail to the applicant not later than three business days (as that term is defined in

§ 3500.2) after the application is received or prepared. However, if the lender denies the borrower's application for credit before the end of the three-business-day period, then the lender need not provide the booklet to the borrower. If a borrower uses a mortgage broker, the mortgage broker shall distribute the special information booklet and the lender need not do so. The intent of this provision is that the applicant receive the special information booklet at the earliest possible date.

(2) In the case of a federally related mortgage loan involving an open-ended credit plan, as defined in § 226.2(a)(20) of Regulation Z (12 CFR), a lender or mortgage broker that provides the borrower with a copy of the brochure entitled "When Your Home is On the Line: What You Should Know About Home Equity Lines of Credit", or any successor brochure issued by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, is deemed to be in compliance with this section.

(3) In the categories of transactions set forth at the end of this paragraph, the lender or mortgage broker does not have to provide the booklet to the borrower. Under the authority of section 19(a) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2617(a)), the Secretary may issue a revised or separate special information booklet that deals with these transactions, or the Secretary may choose to endorse the forms or booklets of other Federal agencies. In such an event, the requirements for delivery by lenders and the availability of the booklet or alternate materials for these transactions will be set forth in a Notice in the Federal Register. This paragraph shall apply to the following transactions:

- (i) Refinancing transactions;
- (ii) Closed-end loans, as defined in 12 CFR 226.2(a)(10) of Regulation Z, when the lender takes a subordinate lien;
- (iii) Reverse mortgages; and
- (iv) Any other federally related mortgage loan whose purpose is not the purchase of a 1- to 4-family residential property.

(b) *Revision.* The Secretary may from time to time revise the special information booklet by publishing a notice in the Federal Register.

(c) *Reproduction.* The special information booklet may be reproduced in any form, provided that no change is made other than as provided under paragraph (d) of this section. The special information booklet may not be made a part of a larger document for purposes of distribution under RESPA and this section. Any color, size and quality of paper, type of print, and

method of reproduction may be used so long as the booklet is clearly legible.

(d) *Permissible changes.* (1) No changes to, deletions from, or additions to the special information booklet currently prescribed by the Secretary shall be made other than those specified in this paragraph (d) or any others approved in writing by the Secretary. A request to the Secretary for approval of any changes shall be submitted in writing to the address indicated in § 3500.3, stating the reasons why the applicant believes such changes, deletions or additions are necessary.

(2) The cover of the booklet may be in any form and may contain any drawings, pictures or artwork, provided that the words "settlement costs" are used in the title. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the lender or others and similar information may appear on the cover, but no discussion of the matters covered in the booklet shall appear on the cover.

(3) The special information booklet may be translated into languages other than English.

§ 3500.7 Good faith estimate.

(a) *Lender to provide.* Except as provided in this paragraph (a) or paragraph (f) of this section, the lender shall provide all applicants for a federally related mortgage loan with a good faith estimate of the amount or range of charges for the specific settlement services the borrower is likely to incur in connection with the settlement. The lender shall provide the good faith estimate required under this section (a suggested format is set forth in Appendix C of this part) either by delivering the good faith estimate or by placing it in the mail to the loan applicant, not later than three business days after the application is received or prepared.

(1) If the lender denies the application for a federally related mortgage loan before the end of the three-business-day period, the lender need not provide the denied borrower with a good faith estimate.

(2) For "no cost" or "no point" loans, the charges to be shown on the good faith estimate include any payments to be made to affiliated or independent settlement service providers. These payments should be shown as P.O.C. (Paid Outside of Closing) on the Good Faith Estimate and the HUD-1 or HUD-1A.

(3) In the case of dealer loans, the lender is responsible for provision of the good faith estimate, either directly or by the dealer.

(4) If a mortgage broker is the exclusive agent of the lender, either the

lender or the mortgage broker shall provide the good faith estimate within three business days after the mortgage broker receives or prepares the application.

(b) *Mortgage broker to provide.* In the event an application is received by a mortgage broker who is not an exclusive agent of the lender, the mortgage broker must provide a good faith estimate within three days of receiving a loan application based on his or her knowledge of the range of costs (a suggested format is set forth in Appendix C of this part). As long as the mortgage broker has provided the good faith estimate, the funding lender is not required to provide an additional good faith estimate, but the funding lender is responsible for ascertaining that the good faith estimate has been delivered. If the application for mortgage credit is denied before the end of the three-business-day period, the mortgage broker need not provide the denied borrower with a good faith estimate.

(c) *Content of good faith estimate.* A good faith estimate consists of an estimate, as a dollar amount or range, of each charge which:

(1) Will be listed in section L of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A in accordance with the instructions set forth in Appendix A to this part; and

(2) That the borrower will normally pay or incur at or before settlement based upon common practice in the locality of the mortgaged property. Each such estimate must be made in good faith and bear a reasonable relationship to the charge a borrower is likely to be required to pay at settlement, and must be based upon experience in the locality of the mortgaged property. As to each charge with respect to which the lender requires a particular settlement service provider to be used, the lender shall make its estimate based upon the lender's knowledge of the amounts charged by such provider.

(d) *Form of good faith estimate.* A suggested good faith estimate form is set forth in Appendix C to this part and is in compliance with the requirements of the Act except for any additional requirements of paragraph (e) of this section. The good faith estimate may be provided together with disclosures required by the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*, so long as all required material for the good faith estimate is grouped together. The lender may include additional relevant information, such as the name/signature of the applicant and loan officer, date, and information identifying the loan application and property, as long as the form remains clear and concise and the

additional information is not more prominent than the required material.

(e) *Particular providers required by lender.* (1) If the lender requires the use (see § 3500.2, "required use") of a particular provider of a settlement service, other than the lender's own employees, and also requires the borrower to pay any portion of the cost of such service, then the good faith estimate must:

(i) Clearly state that use of the particular provider is required and that the estimate is based on the charges of the designated provider;

(ii) Give the name, address, and telephone number of each provider; and

(iii) Describe the nature of any relationship between each such provider and the lender. Plain English references to the relationship should be utilized, e.g., "X is a depositor of the lender," "X is a borrower from the lender," "X has performed 60% of the lender's settlements in the past year." (The lender is not required to keep detailed records of the percentages of use. Similar language, such as "X was used [regularly] [frequently] in our settlements the past year" is also sufficient for the purposes of this paragraph.) In the event that more than one relationship exists, each should be disclosed.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (e)(1) of this section, a "relationship" exists if:

(i) The provider is an associate of the lender, as that term is defined in 12 U.S.C. 2602(8);

(ii) Within the last 12 months, the provider has maintained an account with the lender or had an outstanding loan or credit arrangement with the lender; or

(iii) The lender has repeatedly used or required borrowers to use the services of the provider within the last 12 months.

(3) Except for a provider that is the lender's chosen attorney, credit reporting agency, or appraiser, if the lender is in a controlled business relationship (see § 3500.15) with a provider, the lender may not require the use of that provider.

(4) If the lender maintains a controlled list of required providers (five or more for each discrete service) or relies on a list maintained by others, and at the time of application the lender has not yet decided which provider will be selected from that list, then the lender may satisfy the requirements of this section if the lender:

(i) Provides the borrower with a written statement that the lender will require a particular provider from a lender-controlled or -approved list; and

(ii) Provides the borrower in the Good Faith Estimate the range of costs for the

required provider(s), and provides the name of the specific provider and the actual cost on the HUD-1 or HUD-1A.

(f) *Open-end lines of credit (home-equity plans) under Truth in Lending Act.* In the case of a federally related mortgage loan involving an open-end line of credit (home-equity plan) covered under the Truth in Lending Act and Regulation Z, a lender or mortgage broker that provides the borrower with the disclosures required by 12 CFR 226.5b of Regulation Z at the time the borrower applies for such loan shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2502-0265)

§ 3500.8 Use of HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statements.

(a) *Use by settlement agent.* The settlement agent shall use the HUD-1 settlement statement in every settlement involving a federally related mortgage loan in which there is a borrower and a seller. For transactions in which there is a borrower and no seller, such as refinancing loans or subordinate lien loans, the HUD-1 may be utilized by using the borrower's side of the HUD-1 statement. Alternatively, the form HUD-1A may be used for these transactions. Either the HUD-1 or the HUD-1A, as appropriate, shall be used for every RESPA-covered transaction, unless its use is specifically exempted, but the HUD-1 or HUD-1A may be modified as permitted under this part. The use of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A is exempted for open-end lines of credit (home-equity plans) covered by the Truth in Lending Act and Regulation Z.

(b) *Charges to be stated.* The settlement agent shall complete the HUD-1 or HUD-1A in accordance with the instructions set forth in Appendix A to this part.

(c) *Aggregate Accounting At Settlement.* (1) After itemizing individual deposits in the 1000 series using single-item accounting, the servicer shall make an adjustment based on aggregate accounting. This adjustment equals the difference in the deposit required under aggregate accounting and the sum of the deposits required under single-item accounting. The computation steps for both accounting methods are set out in § 3500.17(d). The adjustment will always be a negative number or zero (-0-). The settlement agent shall enter the aggregate adjustment amount on a final line in the 1000 series of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A statement.

(2) During the phase-in period, as defined in § 3500.17(b), an alternative procedure is available. The settlement

agent may initially calculate the 1000 series deposits for the HUD-1 and HUD-1A settlement statement using single-item analysis with only a one-month cushion (unless the mortgage loan documents indicate a smaller amount). In the escrow account analysis conducted within 45 days of settlement, however, the servicer shall adjust the escrow account to reflect the aggregate accounting balance. Appendix F to this part sets out examples of aggregate analysis. Appendix A to this part contains instructions for completing the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statements using an aggregate analysis adjustment and the alternative process during the phase-in period.

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§ 3500.9 Reproduction of settlement statements.

(a) *Permissible changes—HUD-1.* The following changes and insertions are permitted when the HUD-1 settlement statement is reproduced:

(1) The person reproducing the HUD-1 may insert its business name and logotype in Section A and may rearrange, but not delete, the other information that appears in Section A.

(2) The name, address, and other information regarding the lender and settlement agent may be printed in Sections F and H, respectively.

(3) Reproduction of the HUD-1 must conform to the terminology, sequence, and numbering of line items as presented in lines 100-1400. However, blank lines or items listed in lines 100-1400 that are not used locally or in connection with mortgages by the lender may be deleted, except for the following: Lines 100, 120, 200, 220, 300, 301, 302, 303, 400, 420, 500, 520, 600, 601, 602, 603, 700, 800, 900, 1000, 1100, 1200, 1300, and 1400. The form may be shortened correspondingly. The number of a deleted item shall not be used for a substitute or new item, but the number of a blank space on the HUD-1 may be used for a substitute or new item.

(4) Charges not listed on the HUD-1, but that are customary locally or pursuant to the lender's practice, may be inserted in blank spaces. Where existing blank spaces on the HUD-1 are insufficient, additional lines and spaces may be added and numbered in sequence with spaces on the HUD-1.

(5) The following variations in layout and format are within the discretion of persons reproducing the HUD-1 and do not require prior HUD approval: size of pages; tint or color of pages; size and style of type or print; vertical spacing between lines or provision for

additional horizontal space on lines (for example, to provide sufficient space for recording time periods used in prorations); printing of the HUD-1 contents on separate pages, on the front and back of a single page, or on one continuous page; use of multicopy tear-out sets; printing on rolls for computer purposes; reorganization of Sections B through I, when necessary to accommodate computer printing; and manner of placement of the HUD number, but not the OMB approval number, neither of which may be deleted. The designation of the expiration date of the OMB number may be deleted. Any changes in the HUD number or OMB approval number may be announced by notice in the Federal Register, rather than by amendment of this part.

(6) The borrower's information and the seller's information may be provided on separate pages.

(7) Signature lines may be added.

(8) The HUD-1 may be translated into languages other than English.

(9) An additional page may be attached to the HUD-1 for the purpose of including customary recitals and information used locally in real estate settlements; for example, breakdown of payoff figures, a breakdown of the borrower's total monthly mortgage payments, check disbursements, a statement indicating receipt of funds, applicable special stipulations between buyer and seller, and the date funds are transferred. If space permits, such information may be added at the end of the HUD-1.

(10) As required by HUD/FHA in FHA-insured loans.

(11) As allowed by § 3500.17, relating to an initial escrow account statement.

(b) *Permissible changes—HUD-1A.* The changes and insertions on the HUD-1 permitted under paragraph (a) of this section are also permitted when the HUD-1A settlement statement is reproduced, except the changes described in paragraphs (a) (3) and (6) of this section.

(c) *Written approval.* Any other deviation in the HUD-1 or HUD-1A forms is permissible only upon receipt of written approval of the Secretary. A request to the Secretary for approval shall be submitted in writing to the address indicated in § 3500.3 and shall state the reasons why the applicant believes such deviation is needed. The prescribed form(s) must be used until approval is received.

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§ 3500.10 One-day advance inspection of HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement; delivery; recordkeeping.

(a) *Inspection one day prior to settlement upon request by the borrower.* The settlement agent shall permit the borrower to inspect the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement, completed to set forth those items that are known to the settlement agent at the time of inspection, during the business day immediately preceding settlement. Items related only to the seller's transaction may be omitted from the HUD-1.

(b) *Delivery.* The settlement agent shall provide a completed HUD-1 or HUD-1A to the borrower, the seller (if there is one), the lender (if the lender is not the settlement agent), and/or their agents. When the borrower's and seller's copies of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A differ as permitted by the instructions in Appendix A to this part, both copies shall be provided to the lender (if the lender is not the settlement agent). The settlement agent shall deliver the completed HUD-1 or HUD-1A at or before the settlement, except as provided in paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section.

(c) *Waiver.* The borrower may waive the right to delivery of the completed HUD-1 or HUD-1A no later than at settlement by executing a written waiver at or before settlement. In such case, the completed HUD-1 or HUD-1A shall be mailed or delivered to the borrower, seller, and lender (if the lender is not the settlement agent) as soon as practicable after settlement.

(d) *Exempt transactions.* When the borrower or the borrower's agent does not attend the settlement, or when the settlement agent does not conduct a meeting of the parties for that purpose, the transaction shall be exempt from the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, except that the HUD-1 or HUD-1A shall be mailed or delivered as soon as practicable after settlement.

(e) *Recordkeeping.* The lender shall retain each completed HUD-1 or HUD-1A and related documents for five years after settlement, unless the lender disposes of its interest in the mortgage and does not service the mortgage. In that case, the lender shall provide its copy of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A to the owner or servicer of the mortgage as a part of the transfer of the loan file. Such owner or servicer shall retain the HUD-1 or HUD-1A for the remainder of the five-year period. The Secretary shall have the right to inspect or require copies of records covered by this paragraph (e).

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§ 3500.11 Mailing.

The provisions of this part requiring or permitting mailing of documents shall be deemed to be satisfied by placing the document in the mail (whether or not received by the addressee) addressed to the addresses stated in the loan application or in other information submitted to or obtained by the lender at the time of loan application or submitted or obtained by the lender or settlement agent, except that a revised address shall be used where the lender or settlement agent has been expressly informed in writing of a change in address.

§ 3500.12 No fee.

No fee shall be imposed or charge made upon any other person, as a part of settlement costs or otherwise, by a lender in connection with a federally related mortgage loan made by it (or a loan for the purchase of a manufactured home), or by a servicer (as that term is defined under 12 U.S.C. 2605(i)(2)) for or on account of the preparation and distribution of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement, escrow account statements required pursuant to section 10 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2609), or statements required by the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*

§ 3500.13 Relation to State laws.

(a) State laws that are inconsistent with RESPA or this part are preempted to the extent of the inconsistency. However, RESPA and these regulations do not annul, alter, affect, or exempt any person subject to their provisions from complying with the laws of any State with respect to settlement practices, except to the extent of the inconsistency.

(b) Upon request by any person, the Secretary is authorized to determine if inconsistencies with State law exist; in doing so, the Secretary shall consult with appropriate Federal agencies.

(1) The Secretary may not determine that a State law or regulation is inconsistent with any provision of RESPA or this part, if the Secretary determines that such law or regulation gives greater protection to the consumer.

(2) In determining whether provisions of State law or regulations concerning controlled business arrangements are inconsistent with RESPA or this part, the Secretary may not construe those provisions that impose more stringent limitations on controlled business arrangements as inconsistent with RESPA so long as they give more protection to consumers and/or competition.

(c) Any person may request the Secretary to determine whether an

inconsistency exists by submitting to the address indicated in § 3500.3, a copy of the State law in question, any other law or judicial or administrative opinion that implements, interprets or applies the relevant provision, and an explanation of the possible inconsistency. A determination by the Secretary that an inconsistency with State law exists will be made by publication of a notice in the Federal Register. "Law" as used in this section includes regulations and any enactment which has the force and effect of law and is issued by a State or any political subdivision of a State.

(d) A specific preemption of conflicting State laws regarding notices and disclosures of mortgage servicing transfers is set forth in § 3500.21(h).

§ 3500.14 Prohibition against kickbacks and unearned fees.

(a) *Section 8 violation.* Any violation of this section is a violation of section 8 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2607) and is subject to enforcement as such under § 3500.19.

(b) *No referral fees.* No person shall give and no person shall accept any fee, kickback or other thing of value pursuant to any agreement or understanding, oral or otherwise, that business incident to or part of a settlement service involving a federally related mortgage loan shall be referred to any person. Any referral of a settlement service is not a compensable service, except as set forth in § 3500.14(g)(1). A company may not pay any other company or the employees of any other company for the referral of settlement service business.

(c) *No split of charges except for actual services performed.* No person shall give and no person shall accept any portion, split, or percentage of any charge made or received for the rendering of a settlement service in connection with a transaction involving a federally related mortgage loan other than for services actually performed. A charge by a person for which no or nominal services are performed or for which duplicative fees are charged is an unearned fee and violates this section. The source of the payment does not determine whether or not a service is compensable. Nor may the prohibitions of this Part be avoided by creating an arrangement wherein the purchaser of services splits the fee.

(d) *Thing of value.* This term is broadly defined in section 3(2) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(2)). It includes, without limitation, monies, things, discounts, salaries, commissions, fees, duplicate payments of a charge, stock, dividends, distributions of partnership

profits, franchise royalties, credits representing monies that may be paid at a future date, the opportunity to participate in a money-making program, retained or increased earnings, increased equity in a parent or subsidiary entity, special bank deposits or accounts, special or unusual banking terms, services of all types at special or free rates, sales or rentals at special prices or rates, lease or rental payments based in whole or in part on the amount of business referred, trips and payment of another person's expenses, or reduction in credit against an existing obligation. The term "payment" is used throughout §§ 3500.14 and 3500.15 as synonymous with the giving or receiving any "thing of value" and does not require transfer of money.

(e) *Agreement or understanding.* An agreement or understanding for the referral of business incident to or part of a settlement service need not be written or verbalized but may be established by a practice, pattern or course of conduct. When a thing of value is received repeatedly and is connected in any way with the volume or value of the business referred, the receipt of the thing of value is evidence that it is made pursuant to an agreement or understanding for the referral of business.

(f) *Referral*—(1) A referral includes any oral or written action directed to a person which has the effect of affirmatively influencing the selection by any person of a provider of a settlement service or business incident to or part of a settlement service when such person will pay for such settlement service or business incident thereto or pay a charge attributable in whole or in part to such settlement service or business.

(2) A referral also occurs whenever a person paying for a settlement service or business incident thereto is required to use (see § 3500.2, "required use") a particular provider of a settlement service or business incident thereto.

(g) *Fees, salaries, compensation, or other payments.* (1) Section 8 of RESPA permits:

(i) A payment to an attorney at law for services actually rendered;

(ii) A payment by a title company to its duly appointed agent for services actually performed in the issuance of a policy of title insurance;

(iii) A payment by a lender to its duly appointed agent or contractor for services actually performed in the origination, processing, or funding of a loan;

(iv) A payment to any person of a *bona fide* salary or compensation or other payment for goods or facilities

actually furnished or for services actually performed;

(v) A payment pursuant to cooperative brokerage and referral arrangements or agreements between real estate agents and real estate brokers. (The statutory exemption restated in this paragraph refers only to fee divisions within real estate brokerage arrangements when all parties are acting in a real estate brokerage capacity, and has no applicability to any fee arrangements between real estate brokers and mortgage brokers or between mortgage brokers.);

(vi) Normal promotional and educational activities that are not conditioned on the referral of business and that do not involve the defraying of expenses that otherwise would be incurred by persons in a position to refer settlement services or business incident thereto;

(vii) An employer's payment to its own employees for any referral activities; or

(viii) Any payment by a borrower for computer loan origination services, so long as the disclosure set forth in Appendix E of this part is provided the borrower.

(2) The Department may investigate high prices to see if they are the result of a referral fee or a split of a fee. If the payment of a thing of value bears no reasonable relationship to the market value of the goods or services provided, then the excess is not for services or goods actually performed or provided. These facts may be used as evidence of a violation of section 8 and may serve as a basis for a RESPA investigation. High prices standing alone are not proof of a RESPA violation. The value of a referral (i.e., the value of any additional business obtained thereby) is not to be taken into account in determining whether the payment exceeds the reasonable value of such goods, facilities or services. The fact that the transfer of the thing of value does not result in an increase in any charge made by the person giving the thing of value is irrelevant in determining whether the act is prohibited.

(3) **Multiple services.** When a person in a position to refer settlement service business, such as an attorney, mortgage lender, real estate broker or agent, or developer or builder, receives a payment for providing additional settlement services as part of a real estate transaction, such payment must be for services that are actual, necessary and distinct from the primary services provided by such person. For example, for an attorney of the buyer or seller to receive compensation as a title agent, the attorney must perform core title

agent services (for which liability arises) separate from attorney services, including the evaluation of the title search to determine the insurability of the title, the clearance of underwriting objections, the actual issuance of the policy or policies on behalf of the title insurance company, and, where customary, issuance of the title commitment, and the conducting of the title search and closing.

(h) **Recordkeeping.** Any documents provided pursuant to this section shall be retained for five (5) years from the date of execution.

(i) **Appendix B of this part.** Illustrations in Appendix B of this part demonstrate some of the requirements of this section.

§ 3500.15 Controlled business arrangements.

(a) **General.** A controlled business arrangement is defined in section 3(7) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(7)).

(b) **Violation and exemption.** A controlled business arrangement is not a violation of section 8 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2607) and of § 3500.14 if the conditions set forth in this section are satisfied.

(1) The person making each referral has provided to each person whose business is referred a written disclosure, in the format of the Controlled Business Arrangement Disclosure Statement set forth in Appendix D of this part, of the nature of the relationship (explaining the ownership and financial interest) between the provider of settlement services (or business incident thereto) and the person making the referral and of an estimated charge or range of charges generally made by such provider (which describes the charge using the same terminology, as far as practical, as section L of the HUD-1 settlement statement). The disclosures must be provided on a separate piece of paper no later than the time of each referral or, if the lender requires use of a particular provider, the time of loan application, except that:

(i) Where a lender makes the referral to a borrower, the condition contained in paragraph (b)(1) of this section may be satisfied at the time that the good faith estimate or a statement under § 3500.7(d) is provided; and

(ii) Whenever an attorney or law firm requires a client to use a particular title insurance agent, the attorney or law firm shall provide the disclosures no later than the time the attorney or law firm is engaged by the client. Failure to comply with the disclosure requirements of this section may be overcome if the person making a referral can prove by a preponderance of the

evidence that procedures reasonably adopted to result in compliance with these conditions have been maintained and that any failure to comply with these conditions was unintentional and the result of a *bona fide* error. An error of legal judgment with respect to a person's obligations under RESPA is not a *bona fide* error. Administrative and judicial interpretations of section 130(c) of the Truth in Lending Act shall not be binding interpretations of the preceding sentence or section 8(d)(3) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2607(d)(3)).

(2) No person making a referral has required (as defined in § 3500.2, "required use") any person to use any particular provider of settlement services or business incident thereto, except if such person is a lender, for requiring a buyer, borrower or seller to pay for the services of an attorney, credit reporting agency, or real estate appraiser chosen by the lender to represent the lender's interest in a real estate transaction, or except if such person is an attorney or law firm for arranging for issuance of a title insurance policy for a client, directly as agent or through a separate corporate title insurance agency that may be operated as an adjunct to the law practice of the attorney or law firm, as part of representation of that client in a real estate transaction.

(3) The only thing of value that is received from the arrangement other than payments listed in § 3500.14(g) is a return on an ownership interest or franchise relationship.

(i) In a controlled business arrangement:

(A) *Bona fide* dividends, and capital or equity distributions, related to ownership interest or franchise relationship, between entities in an affiliate relationship, are permissible; and

(B) *Bona fide* business loans, advances, and capital or equity contributions between entities in an affiliate relationship (in any direction), are not prohibited—so long as they are for ordinary business purposes and are not fees for the referral of settlement service business or unearned fees.

(ii) A return on an ownership interest does not include:

(A) Any payment which has as a basis of calculation no apparent business motive other than distinguishing among recipients of payments on the basis of the amount of their actual, estimated or anticipated referrals;

(B) Any payment which varies according to the relative amount of referrals by the different recipients of similar payments; or

(C) A payment based on an ownership, partnership or joint venture share which has been adjusted on the basis of previous relative referrals by recipients of similar payments.

(iii) Neither the mere labelling of a thing of value, nor the fact that it may be calculated pursuant to a corporate or partnership organizational document or a franchise agreement, will determine whether it is a *bona fide* return on an ownership interest or franchise relationship. Whether a thing of value is such a return will be determined by analyzing facts and circumstances on a case by case basis.

(iv) A return on franchise relationship may be a payment to or from a franchisee but it does not include any payment which is not based on the franchise agreement, nor any payment which varies according to the number or amount of referrals by the franchisor or franchisee or which is based on a franchise agreement which has been adjusted on the basis of a previous number or amount of referrals by the franchisor or franchisees. A franchise agreement may not be constructed to insulate against kickbacks or referral fees.

(c) *Definitions.* As used in this section:

(1) *Associate* is defined in section 3(8) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2602(8)).

(2) *Affiliate relationship* means the relationship among business entities where one entity has effective control over the other by virtue of a partnership or other agreement or is under common control with the other by a third entity or where an entity is a corporation related to another corporation as parent to subsidiary by an identity of stock ownership.

(3) *Beneficial ownership* means the effective ownership of an interest in a provider of settlement services or the right to use and control the ownership interest involved even though legal ownership or title may be held in another person's name.

(4) *Control*, as used in the definitions of "associate" and "affiliate relationship," means that a person:

(i) Is a general partner, officer, director, or employer of another person;

(ii) Directly or indirectly or acting in concert with others, or through one or more subsidiaries, owns, holds with power to vote, or holds proxies representing, more than 20 percent of the voting interests of another person;

(iii) Affirmatively influences in any manner the election of a majority of the directors of another person; or

(iv) Has contributed more than 20 percent of the capital of the other person.

(5) *Direct ownership* means the holding of legal title to an interest in a provider of settlement service except where title is being held for the beneficial owner.

(6) *Franchise* is defined in 16 CFR 436.2(a).

(7) *Franchisor* is defined in 16 CFR 436.2(c).

(8) *Franchisee* is defined in 16 CFR 436.2(d).

(9) *Person who is in a position to refer settlement service business* means any real estate broker or agent, lender, mortgage broker, builder or developer, attorney, title company, title agent, or other person deriving a significant portion of his or her gross income from providing settlement services.

(d) *Recordkeeping.* Any documents provided pursuant to this section shall be retained for 5 years after the date of execution.

(e) *Appendix B of this part.* Illustrations in Appendix B of this part demonstrate some of the requirements of this section.

§ 3500.16 Title companies.

No seller of property that will be purchased with the assistance of a federally related mortgage loan shall violate section 9 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2608). Section 3500.2 defines "required use" of a provider of a settlement service. Section 3500.19(c) explains the liability of a seller for a violation of this section.

§ 3500.17 Escrow accounts.

(a) *General.* This section sets out the requirements for an escrow account that a lender establishes in connection with a federally related mortgage loan. It sets limits for escrow accounts using calculations based on monthly payments and disbursements within a calendar year. If an escrow account involves biweekly or any other payment period, the requirements in this section shall be modified accordingly. A HUD Public Guidance Document entitled "Biweekly Payments—Example" provides examples of biweekly accounting and a HUD Public Guidance Document entitled "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example" provides examples of a 3-year accounting cycle that may be used in accordance with paragraph (c)(9) of this section.

(b) *Definitions.* As used in this section:

Acceptable accounting method means an accounting method that a servicer uses to conduct an escrow account analysis for an escrow account subject to the provisions of § 3500.17(c).

Aggregate (or) composite analysis, hereafter called *aggregate analysis,*

means an accounting method a servicer uses in conducting an escrow account analysis by computing the sufficiency of escrow account funds by analyzing the account as a whole. Appendix F to this part sets forth examples of aggregate escrow account analyses.

Annual Escrow Account Statement means a statement containing all of the information set forth in § 3500.17(i). As noted in § 3500.17(i), a servicer shall submit an annual escrow account statement to the borrower within 30 calendar days of the end of the escrow account computation year, after conducting an escrow account analysis.

Conversion date means the date three years after the publication date of the rule adding this section (i.e., October 27, 1997) by which date all servicers shall use aggregate analysis.

Cushion or reserve (hereafter *cushion*) means funds that a servicer may require a borrower to pay into an escrow account to cover unanticipated disbursements or disbursements made before the borrower's payments are available in the account, as limited by § 3500.17(c).

Deficiency is the amount of a negative balance in an escrow account. As noted in § 3500.17(f), if a servicer advances funds for a borrower, then the servicer must perform an escrow account analysis before seeking repayment of the deficiency.

Delivery means the placing of a document in the United States mail, first-class postage paid, addressed to the last known address of the recipient. Hand delivery also constitutes delivery.

Disbursement date means the date on which the servicer actually pays an escrow item from the escrow account. Section 3500.17(k) provides that the servicer shall use as the disbursement date a date on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts, if available, or the deadline to avoid a penalty.

Escrow account means any account that a servicer establishes or controls on behalf of a borrower to pay taxes, insurance premiums (including flood insurance), or other charges with respect to a federally related mortgage loan, including charges that the borrower and servicer have voluntarily agreed that the servicer should collect and pay. The definition encompasses any account established for this purpose, including a "trust account", "reserve account", "impound account", or other term in different localities. An "escrow account" includes any arrangement where the servicer adds a portion of the borrower's payments to principal and subsequently deducts from principal the disbursements for escrow account items.

For purposes of this section, the term "escrow account" excludes any account that is under the borrower's total control.

Escrow account analysis means the accounting that a servicer conducts in the form of a trial running balance for an escrow account to:

- (1) Determine the appropriate target balances;
- (2) Compute the borrower's monthly payments for the next escrow account computation year and any deposits needed to establish or maintain the account; and
- (3) Determine whether shortages, surpluses or deficiencies exist.

Escrow account computation year is a 12-month period that a servicer establishes for the escrow account beginning with the borrower's initial payment date. The term includes each 12-month period thereafter, unless a servicer chooses to issue a short year statement under the conditions stated in § 3500.17(i)(4).

Escrow account item or separate item means any separate expenditure category, such as "taxes" or "insurance", for which funds are collected in the escrow account for disbursement. An escrow account item with installment payments, such as local property taxes, remains one escrow account item regardless of multiple disbursement dates to the tax authority.

Initial escrow account statement means the first disclosure statement that the servicer delivers to the borrower concerning the borrower's escrow account. The initial escrow account statement shall meet the requirements of § 3500.17(g) and be in substantially the format set forth in § 3500.17(h).

Installment payment means one of two or more payments payable on an escrow account item during an escrow account computation year. An example of an installment payment is where a jurisdiction bills quarterly for taxes.

Payment due date means the date each month when the borrower's monthly payment to an escrow account is due to the servicer. The initial payment date is the borrower's first payment due date to an escrow account.

Phase-in period means the period beginning on the effective date of this final rule and ending on the conversion date, i.e., October 27, 1997, by which date all servicers shall use the aggregate accounting method in conducting escrow account analyses.

Post-rule account means an escrow account established in connection with a federally related mortgage loan whose settlement date is on or after the effective date of this section.

Pre-accrual is a practice some servicers use to require borrowers to deposit funds, needed for disbursement and maintenance of a cushion, in the escrow account some period before the disbursement date. Pre-accrual is subject to the limitations of § 3500.17(c).

Pre-rule account is an escrow account established in connection with a federally related mortgage loan whose settlement date is before the effective date of this rule.

Shortage means an amount by which a current escrow account balance falls short of the target balance at the time of escrow analysis.

Single-item analysis means an accounting method servicers use in conducting an escrow account analysis by computing the sufficiency of escrow account funds by considering each escrow item separately. Appendix F to this part sets forth examples of single-item analysis.

Submission (of an escrow account statement) means the delivery of the statement.

Surplus means an amount by which the current escrow account balance exceeds the target balance for the account.

System of recordkeeping means the servicer's method of keeping information that reflects the facts relating to that servicer's handling of the borrower's escrow account, including, but not limited to, the payment of amounts from the escrow account and the submission of initial and annual escrow account statements to borrowers.

Target balance means the estimated month end balance in an escrow account that is just sufficient to cover the remaining disbursements from the escrow account in the escrow account computation year, taking into account the remaining scheduled periodic payments, and a cushion, if any.

Trial running balance means the accounting process that derives the target balances over the course of an escrow account computation year. Section 3500.17(d) provides a description of the steps involved in performing a trial running balance.

(c) *Limits on payments to escrow accounts; acceptable accounting methods to determine limits.*

(1) A lender or servicer (hereafter servicer) shall not require a borrower to deposit into any escrow account, created in connection with a federally related mortgage loan, more than the following amounts:

(i) *Charges at settlement or upon creation of an escrow account.* At the time a servicer creates an escrow account for a borrower, the servicer may charge the borrower an amount

sufficient to pay the charges respecting the mortgaged property, such as taxes and insurance, which are attributable to the period from the date such payment(s) were last paid until the initial payment date. The "amount sufficient to pay" is computed so that the lowest month end target balance projected for the escrow account computation year is zero (-0-) (see Step 2 in Appendix F to this part). In addition, the servicer may charge the borrower a cushion that shall be no greater than one-sixth (1/6) of the estimated total annual payments from the escrow account.

(ii) *Charges during the life of the escrow account.* Throughout the life of an escrow account, the servicer may charge the borrower a monthly sum equal to one-twelfth (1/12) of the total annual escrow payments which the servicer reasonably anticipates paying from the account. In addition, the servicer may add an amount to maintain a cushion no greater than one-sixth (1/6) of the estimated total annual payments from the account. However, if a servicer determines through an escrow account analysis that there is a shortage or deficiency, the servicer may require the borrower to pay additional deposits to make up the shortage or eliminate the deficiency, subject to the limitations set forth in § 3500.17(f).

(2) *Escrow analysis at creation of escrow account.* Before establishing an escrow account, the servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis to determine the amount the borrower shall deposit into the escrow account, subject to the limitations of § 3500.17(c)(1)(i) and the amount of the borrower's periodic payments into the escrow account, subject to the limitations of § 3500.17(c)(1)(ii). In conducting the escrow account analysis, the servicer shall estimate the disbursement amounts according to § 3500.17(c)(7). Pursuant to § 3500.17(k), the servicer shall use a date on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts, if available, or the deadline to avoid a penalty as the disbursement date for the escrow item. Upon completing the initial escrow account analysis, the servicer shall prepare and deliver an initial escrow account statement to the borrower, as set forth in § 3500.17(g). The servicer shall use the escrow account analysis to determine whether a surplus, shortage or deficiency exists since settlement and shall make any adjustments to the account pursuant to § 3500.17(f).

(3) Subsequent escrow account analyses. For each escrow account, the servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis at the completion of

the escrow account computation year to determine the borrower's monthly escrow account payments for the next computation year, subject to the limitations of § 3500.17(c)(1)(ii). In conducting the escrow account analysis, the servicer shall estimate the disbursement amounts according to § 3500.17(c)(7). Pursuant to § 3500.17(k), the servicer shall use a date on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts, if available, or the deadline to avoid a penalty as the disbursement date for the escrow item. The servicer shall use the escrow account analysis to determine whether a surplus, shortage or deficiency exists and shall make any adjustments to the account pursuant to § 3500.17(f). Upon completing an escrow account analysis, the servicer shall prepare and submit an annual escrow account statement to the borrower, as set forth in § 3500.17(i).

(4) Acceptable accounting methods to determine escrow limits. The following are acceptable accounting methods that servicers may use in conducting an escrow account analysis.

(i) Pre-rule accounts. For pre-rule accounts, servicers may use either single-item analysis or aggregate-analysis during the phase-in period. In conducting the escrow account analysis, servicers shall use "month-end" accounting. Under month-end accounting, the timing of the disbursements and payments within the month is irrelevant. As of the conversion date, all pre-rule accounts shall comply with the requirements for post-rule accounts in paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section. During the phase-in period, the transfer of servicing of a pre-rule account to another servicer does not convert the account to a post-rule account. After the effective date of this rule, refinancing transactions (as defined in § 3500.2) shall comply with the requirements for post-rule accounts.

(ii) Post-rule accounts. For post-rule accounts, servicers shall use aggregate accounting to conduct an escrow account analysis. In conducting the escrow account analysis, servicers shall use "month-end" accounting. Under month-end accounting, the timing of the disbursements and payments within the month is irrelevant.

(5) *Cushion*. For post-rule accounts, the cushion shall be no greater than one-sixth ($\frac{1}{6}$) of the estimated total annual disbursements from the escrow account using aggregate analysis accounting. For pre-rule accounts, the cushion may not exceed the total of one-sixth of the estimated annual disbursements for each escrow account item using single-item analysis accounting. In determining the cushion using single-

item analysis, a servicer shall not divide an escrow account item into sub-accounts, even if the payee requires installment payments.

(6) *Restrictions on pre-accrual*. For pre-rule accounts, a servicer shall not require any pre-accrual that results in the escrow account balance exceeding the limits of paragraph (c)(1) of this section. In addition, if the mortgage documents in a pre-rule account are silent about the amount of pre-accrual, the servicer shall not require in excess of one month of pre-accrual, subject to the additional limitations provided in paragraph (c)(8) of this section. For post-rule accounts, a servicer shall not practice pre-accrual.

(7) *Servicer estimates of disbursement amounts*. To conduct an escrow account analysis, the servicer shall estimate the amount of escrow account items to be disbursed. If the servicer knows the charge for an escrow item in the next computation year, then the servicer shall use that amount in estimating disbursement amounts. If the charge is unknown to the servicer, the servicer may base the estimate on the preceding year's charge, or the preceding year's charge as modified by an amount not exceeding the most recent year's change in the national Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI, all items). In cases of unassessed new construction, the servicer may base an estimate on the assessment of comparable residential property in the market area.

(8) *Provisions in mortgage documents*. The servicer shall examine the mortgage loan documents to determine the applicable cushion and limitations on pre-accrual for each escrow account. If the mortgage loan documents provide for lower cushion limits or less pre-accrual than this section, then the terms of the loan documents apply. Where the terms of any mortgage loan document allow greater payments to an escrow account than allowed by this section, then this section controls the applicable limits. Where the mortgage loan documents do not specifically establish an escrow account, whether a servicer may establish an escrow account for the loan is a matter for determination by State law. If the mortgage loan document is silent on the escrow account limits (for cushion or pre-accrual) and a servicer establishes an escrow account under State law, then the limitations of this section apply unless State law provides for a lower amount. If the loan documents provide for escrow accounts up to the RESPA limits, then the servicer may require the maximum amounts consistent with this

section, unless an applicable State law sets a lesser amount.

(9) *Assessments for periods longer than one year*. Some escrow account items may be billed for periods longer than one year. For example, servicers may need to collect flood insurance or water purification escrow funds for payment every three years. In such cases, the servicer shall estimate the borrower's payments for a full cycle of disbursements. For a flood insurance premium payable every 3 years, the servicer shall collect the payments reflecting 36 equal monthly amounts. For two out of the three years, however, the account balance may not reach its low monthly balance because the low point will be on a three-year cycle, as compared to an annual one. The annual escrow account statement shall explain this situation (see example in the HUD Public Guidance Document entitled "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example", available in accordance with § 3500.3).

(d) *Methods of escrow account analysis*. Paragraph (c) of this section prescribes acceptable accounting methods. The following sets forth the steps servicers shall use to determine whether their use of an acceptable accounting method conforms with the limitations in § 3500.17(c)(1). The steps set forth in this section derive maximum limits. Servicers may use accounting procedures that result in lower target balances. In particular, servicers may use a cushion less than the permissible cushion or no cushion at all. This section does not require the use of a cushion.

(1) *Aggregate analysis*. (i) When a servicer uses aggregate analysis in conducting the escrow account analysis, the target balances may not exceed the balances computed according to the following arithmetic operations:

(A) The servicer first projects a trial balance for the account as a whole over the next computation year (a trial running balance). In doing so the servicer assumes that it will make estimated disbursements on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts, if available, or the deadline to avoid a penalty. The servicer does not use pre-accrual on these disbursement dates. The servicer also assumes that the borrower will make monthly payments equal to one-twelfth of the estimated total annual escrow account disbursements.

(B) The servicer then examines the monthly trial balances and adds to the first monthly balance an amount just sufficient to bring the lowest monthly trial balance to zero, and adjusts all other monthly balances accordingly.

(C) The servicer then adds to the monthly balances the permissible cushion. The cushion is two months of the borrower's escrow payments to the servicer or a lesser amount specified by State law or the mortgage document (net of any increases or decreases because of prior year shortages or surpluses, respectively).

(i) *Lowest monthly balance.* Under aggregate analysis, the lowest monthly target balance for the account shall be less than or equal to one-sixth of the estimated total annual escrow account disbursements or a lesser amount specified by State law or the mortgage document. The target balances that the servicer derives using these steps yield the maximum limit for the escrow account. Appendix F to this part illustrates these steps.

(2) *Single-item or other non-aggregate analysis method.* (i) When a servicer uses single-item analysis or any hybrid accounting method in conducting an escrow account analysis during the phase-in period, the target balances may not exceed the balances computed according to the following arithmetic operations:

(A) The servicer first projects a trial balance for each item over the next computation year (a trial running balance). In doing so the servicer assumes that it will make estimated disbursements on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts, if available, or the deadline to avoid a penalty. The servicer does not use pre-accrual on these disbursement dates. The servicer also assumes that the borrower will make periodic payments equal to one-twelfth of the estimated total annual escrow account disbursements.

(B) The servicer then examines the monthly trial balance for each escrow account item and adds to the first monthly balance for each separate item an amount just sufficient to bring the lowest monthly trial balance for that item to zero, and then adjusts all other monthly balances accordingly.

(C) The servicer then adds the permissible cushion, if any, to the monthly balance for the separate escrow account item. The permissible cushion is two months of escrow payments for the escrow account item (net of any increases or decreases because of prior year shortages or surpluses, respectively) or a lesser amount specified by State law or the mortgage document.

(D) The servicer then examines the balances for each item to make certain that the lowest monthly balance for that item is less than or equal to one-sixth of the estimated total annual escrow

account disbursements for that item or a lesser amount specified by State law or the mortgage document.

(ii) In performing an escrow account analysis using single-item analysis, servicers may account for each escrow account item separately, but servicers shall not further divide accounts into sub-accounts, even if the payee of a disbursement requires installment payments. The target balances that the servicer derives using these steps yield the maximum limit for the escrow account. Appendix F to this part illustrates these steps.

(e) *Transfer of servicing.* (1) If the new servicer changes either the monthly payment amount or the accounting method used by the transferor (old) servicer, then the new servicer shall provide the borrower with an initial escrow account statement within 60 days of the date of servicing transfer.

(i) Where a new servicer provides an initial escrow account statement upon the transfer of servicing, the new servicer shall use the effective date of the transfer of servicing to establish the new escrow account computation year.

(ii) Where the new servicer retains the monthly payments and accounting method used by the transferor servicer, then the new servicer may continue to use the escrow account computation year established by the transferor servicer or may choose to establish a different computation year using a short-year statement. At the completion of the escrow account computation year or any short year, the new servicer shall perform an escrow analysis and provide the borrower with an annual escrow account statement.

(2) The new servicer shall treat shortages, surpluses and deficiencies in the transferred escrow account according to the procedures set forth in § 3500.17(f).

(3) A pre-rule account remains a pre-rule account upon the transfer of servicing to a new servicer so long as the transfer occurs before the conversion date.

(f) *Shortages, surpluses, and deficiencies requirements.* (1) *Escrow account analysis.* For each escrow account, the servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis to determine whether a surplus, shortage or deficiency exists.

(i) As noted in § 3500.17(c) (2) and (3), the servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis upon establishing an escrow account and at completion of the escrow account computation year.

(ii) The servicer may conduct an escrow account analysis at other times during the escrow computation year. If a servicer advances funds in paying a

disbursement, which is not the result of a borrower's payment default under the underlying mortgage document, then the servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis to determine the extent of the deficiency before seeking repayment of the funds from the borrower under this paragraph (f).

(2) *Surpluses.* (i) If an escrow account analysis discloses a surplus, the servicer shall, within 30 days from the date of the analysis, refund the surplus to the borrower if the surplus is greater than or equal to 50 dollars (\$50). If the surplus is less than 50 dollars (\$50), the servicer may refund such amount to the borrower, or credit such amount against the next year's escrow payments.

(ii) These provisions regarding surpluses apply if the borrower is current at the time of the escrow account analysis. A borrower is current if the servicer receives the borrower's payments within 30 days of the payment due date. If the servicer does not receive the borrower's payment within 30 days of the payment due date, then the servicer may retain the surplus in the escrow account pursuant to the terms of the mortgage loan documents.

(3) *Shortages.* (i) If an escrow account analysis discloses a shortage of less than one month's escrow account payment, then the servicer has three possible courses of action:

(A) The servicer may allow a shortage to exist and do nothing to change it;

(B) The servicer may require the borrower to repay the shortage amount within 30 days; or

(C) The servicer may require the borrower to repay the shortage amount in equal monthly payments over at least a 12-month period.

(ii) If an escrow account analysis discloses a shortage that is greater than or equal to one month's escrow account payment, then the servicer has two possible courses of action:

(A) The servicer may allow a shortage to exist and do nothing to change it; or

(B) The servicer may require the borrower to repay the shortage in equal monthly payments over at least a 12-month period.

(4) *Deficiency.* If the escrow account analysis confirms a deficiency, then the servicer may require the borrower to pay additional monthly deposits to the account to eliminate the deficiency.

(i) If the deficiency is less than one month's escrow account payment, then the servicer:

(A) May allow the deficiency to exist and do nothing to change it;

(B) May require the borrower to repay the deficiency within 30 days; or

(C) May require the borrower to repay the deficiency in 2 or more equal monthly payments.

(ii) If the deficiency is greater than or equal to 1 month's escrow payment, the servicer may allow the deficiency to exist and do nothing to change it or may require the borrower to repay the deficiency in two or more equal monthly payments.

(iii) These provisions regarding deficiencies apply if the borrower is current at the time of the escrow account analysis. A borrower is current if the servicer receives the borrower's payments within 30 days of the payment due date. If the servicer does not receive the borrower's payment within 30 days of the payment due date, then the servicer may recover the deficiency pursuant to the terms of the mortgage loan documents.

(5) *Notice of Shortage or Deficiency in Escrow Account.* The servicer shall notify the borrower at least once during the escrow account computation year if there is a shortage or deficiency in the escrow account. The notice may be part of the annual escrow account statement or it may be a separate document.

(g) *Initial Escrow Account Statement.* (1) Submission at settlement, or within 45 calendar days of settlement. As noted in § 3500.17(c)(2), the servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis before establishing an escrow account to determine the amount the borrower shall deposit into the escrow account, subject to the limitations of § 3500.17(c)(1)(i). After conducting the escrow account analysis for each escrow account, the servicer shall submit an initial escrow account statement to the borrower at settlement or within 45 calendar days of settlement for escrow accounts that are established as a condition of the loan.

(i) The initial escrow account statement shall include the amount of the borrower's monthly mortgage payment and the portion of the monthly payment going into the escrow account and shall itemize the estimated taxes, insurance premiums, and other charges that the servicer reasonably anticipates to be paid from the escrow account during the escrow account computation year and the anticipated disbursement dates of those charges. The initial escrow account statement shall indicate the amount that the servicer selects as a cushion. The statement shall include a trial running balance for the account.

(ii) Pursuant to § 3500.17(h)(2), the servicer may incorporate the initial escrow account statement into the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement. If the servicer does not incorporate the initial escrow account

statement into the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement, then the servicer shall submit the initial escrow account statement to the borrower as a separate document.

(2) *Time of submission of initial escrow account statement for an escrow account established after settlement.* For escrow accounts established after settlement (and which are not a condition of the loan), a servicer shall submit an initial escrow account statement to a borrower within 45 calendar days of the date of establishment of the escrow account.

(h) *Format for initial escrow account statement.* (1) The format and a completed example for an initial escrow account statement are set out in HUD Public Guidance Documents entitled "Initial Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Format" and "Initial Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example", available in accordance with § 3500.3.

(2) *Incorporation of Initial Escrow Account Statement Into HUD-1 or HUD-1A Settlement Statement.* Pursuant to § 3500.9(a)(11), a servicer may add the initial escrow account statement to the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement. The servicer may include the initial escrow account statement in the basic text or may attach the initial escrow account statement as an additional page to the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement.

(3) *Identification of Payees.* The initial escrow account statement need not identify a specific payee by name if it provides sufficient information to identify the use of the funds. For example, appropriate entries include: county taxes, hazard insurance, condominium dues, etc. If a particular payee, such as a taxing body, receives more than one payment during the escrow account computation year, the statement shall indicate each payment and disbursement date. If there are several taxing authorities or insurers, the statement shall identify each taxing body or insurer (e.g., "City Taxes", "School Taxes", "Hazard Insurance", or "Flood Insurance," etc.).

(i) *Annual Escrow Account Statements.* For each escrow account, a servicer shall submit an annual escrow account statement to the borrower within 30 days of the completion of the escrow account computation year. The servicer shall also submit to the borrower the previous year's projection or initial escrow account statement. The servicer shall conduct an escrow account analysis before submitting an annual escrow account statement to the borrower.

(1) *Contents of Annual Escrow Account Statement.* The annual escrow account statement shall provide an account history, reflecting the activity in the escrow account during the escrow account computation year, and a projection of the activity in the account for the next year. In preparing the statement, the servicer may assume scheduled payments and disbursements will be made for the final 2 months of the escrow account computation year. The annual escrow account statement shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(i) The amount of the borrower's current monthly mortgage payment and the portion of the monthly payment going into the escrow account;

(ii) The amount of the past year's monthly mortgage payment and the portion of the monthly payment that went into the escrow account;

(iii) The total amount paid into the escrow account during the past computation year;

(iv) The total amount paid out of the escrow account during the same period for taxes, insurance premiums, and other charges;

(v) The balance in the escrow account at the end of the period;

(vi) An explanation of how any surplus is being handled by the servicer;

(vii) An explanation of how any shortage or deficiency is to be paid by the borrower; and

(viii) If applicable, the reason(s) why the estimated low monthly balance was not reached, as indicated by noting differences between the most recent account history and last year's projection. HUD Public Guidance Documents entitled "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Format" and "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example" set forth an acceptable format and methodology for conveying this information.

(2) *No annual statements in the case of default, foreclosure, or bankruptcy.* This paragraph (i)(2) contains an exemption from the provisions of § 3500.17(i)(1). If at the time the servicer conducts the escrow account analysis the borrower is more than 30 days overdue, then the servicer is exempt from the requirements of submitting an annual escrow account statement to the borrower under § 3500.17(i). This exemption also applies in situations where the servicer has brought an action for foreclosure under the underlying mortgage loan, or where the borrower is in bankruptcy proceedings. If the servicer does not issue an annual statement pursuant to this exemption and the loan subsequently is reinstated

or otherwise becomes current, the servicer shall provide a history of the account since the last annual statement (which may be longer than 1 year) within 90 days of the date the account became current.

(3) *Delivery with other material.* The servicer may deliver the annual escrow account statement to the borrower with other statements or materials, including the Substitute 1098, which is provided for federal income tax purposes.

(4) *Short year statements.* A servicer may issue a short year annual escrow account statement ("short year statement") to change one escrow account computation year to another. By using a short year statement a servicer may adjust its production schedule or alter the escrow account computation year for the escrow account.

(i) *Effect of short year statement.* The short year statement shall end the "escrow account computation year" for the escrow account and establish the beginning date of the new escrow account computation year. The servicer shall deliver the short year statement to the borrower within 60 days from the end of the short year.

(ii) *Short year statement upon servicing transfer.* Upon the transfer of servicing, the transferor (old) servicer shall submit a short year statement to the borrower within 60 days of the effective date of transfer.

(iii) *Short year statement upon loan payoff.* If a borrower pays off a mortgage loan during the escrow account computation year, the servicer shall submit a short year statement to the borrower within 60 days after receiving the pay-off funds.

(j) *Formats for annual escrow account statement.* The formats and completed examples for annual escrow account statements using single-item analysis (pre-rule accounts) and aggregate analysis are set out in HUD Public Guidance Documents entitled "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Format" and "Annual Escrow Account Disclosure Statement—Example".

(k) *Timely payments.* (1) If the terms of any federally related mortgage loan require the borrower to make payments to an escrow account, the servicer shall pay the disbursements in a timely manner, that is, by the disbursement date, so long as the borrower's payment is not more than 30 days overdue. In calculating the disbursement date, the servicer shall use a date on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts, if available, or the deadline to avoid a penalty.

(2) The servicer shall advance funds to make disbursements in a timely manner so long as the borrower's

payment is not more than 30 days overdue. Upon advancing funds to pay a disbursement, the servicer may seek repayment from the borrower for the deficiency pursuant to § 3500.17(f).

(l) *System of recordkeeping.* (1) Each servicer shall keep records, which may involve electronic storage, microfiche storage, or any method of computerized storage, so long as the information is easily retrievable, reflecting the servicer's handling of each borrower's escrow account. The servicer's records shall include, but not be limited to, the payment of amounts into and from the escrow account and the submission of initial and annual escrow account statements to the borrower.

(2) The servicer responsible for servicing the borrower's escrow account shall maintain the records for that account for a period of at least five years after the servicer last serviced the escrow account.

(3) A servicer shall provide the Secretary with information contained in the servicer's records for a specific escrow account, or for a number or class of escrow accounts, within 30 days of the Secretary's written request for the information. The servicer shall convert any information contained in electronic storage, microfiche or computerized storage to paper copies for review by the Secretary.

(i) To aid in investigations, the Secretary may also issue an administrative subpoena for the production of documents, and for the testimony of such witnesses as the Secretary deems advisable.

(ii) If the subpoenaed party refuses to obey the Secretary's administrative subpoena, the Secretary is authorized to seek a court order requiring compliance with the subpoena from any United States district court. Failure to obey such an order of the court may be punished as contempt of court.

(4) Borrowers may seek information contained in the servicer's records by complying with the provisions set forth in 12 U.S.C. 2605(e) and § 3500.21(f).

(5) After receiving a request (by letter or subpoena) from the Department for information relating to whether a servicer submitted an escrow account statement to the borrower, the servicer shall respond within 30 days. If the servicer is unable to provide the Department with such information, the Secretary shall deem that lack of information to be evidence of the servicer's failure to submit the statement to the borrower.

(m) *Penalties.* A servicer's failure to submit to a borrower an initial or annual escrow account statement meeting the requirements of this part shall constitute

a violation of section 10(d) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2609(d)) and this section. For each such violation, the Secretary shall assess a civil penalty in accordance with section 10(d) of RESPA.

(n) *Civil penalties procedures.* The following procedures shall apply whenever the Department seeks to impose a civil money penalty for violation of section 10(c) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2609(c)):

(1) *Purpose and scope.* This paragraph (n) explains the procedures by which the Secretary may impose penalties under 12 U.S.C. 2609(d). These procedures include administrative hearings, judicial review, and collection of penalties. This paragraph (n) governs penalties imposed under 12 U.S.C. 2609(d) and, when noted, adopts those portions of 24 CFR part 30, subpart E, that apply to all other civil penalty proceedings initiated by the Secretary.

(2) *Authority.* The Secretary has the authority to impose civil penalties under section 10(d) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2609(d)).

(3) *Notice of intent to impose civil money penalties.* Whenever the Secretary intends to impose a civil money penalty for violations of section 10(c) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2609(c)), the responsible program official, or his or her designee, shall serve a written Notice of Intent to Impose Civil Money Penalties (Notice of Intent) upon any servicer on which the Secretary intends to impose the penalty. A copy of the Notice of Intent must be filed with the Chief Docket Clerk, Office of Administrative Law Judges, at the address provided in the Notice of Intent. The Notice of Intent will provide:

(i) A short, plain statement of the facts upon which the Secretary has determined that a civil money penalty should be imposed, including a brief description of the specific violations under 12 U.S.C. 2609(c) with which the servicer is charged and whether such violations are believed to be intentional or unintentional in nature, or a combination thereof;

(ii) The amount of the civil money penalty that the Secretary intends to impose and whether the limitations in 12 U.S.C. 2609(d)(1), apply;

(iii) The right of the servicer to a hearing on the record to appeal the Secretary's preliminary determination to impose a civil penalty;

(iv) The procedures to appeal the penalty;

(v) The consequences of failure to appeal the penalty; and

(vi) The name, address, and telephone number of the representative of the Department, and the address of the Chief Docket Clerk, Office of

Administrative Law Judges, should the servicer decide to appeal the penalty.

(4) *Appeal procedures.* (i) *Answer.* To appeal the imposition of a penalty, a servicer shall, within 30 days after receiving service of the Notice of Intent, file a written Answer with the Chief Docket Clerk, Office of Administrative Law Judges, Department of Housing and Urban Development, at the address provided in the Notice of Intent. The Answer shall include a statement that the servicer admits, denies, or does not have (and is unable to obtain) sufficient information to admit or deny each allegation made in the Notice of Intent. A statement of lack of information shall have the effect of a denial. Any allegation that is not denied shall be deemed admitted. Failure to submit an Answer within the required period of time will result in a decision by the Administrative Law Judge based upon the Department's submission of evidence in the Notice of Intent.

(ii) *Submission of evidence.* A servicer that receives the Notice of Intent has a right to present evidence. Evidence must be submitted within 45 calendar days from the date of service of the Notice of Intent, or by such other time as may be established by the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). The servicer's failure to submit evidence within the required period of time will result in a decision by the Administrative Law Judge based upon the Department's submission of evidence in the Notice of Intent. The servicer may present evidence of the following:

(A) The servicer did submit the required escrow account statement(s) to the borrower(s); or

(B) Even if the servicer did not submit the required statement(s), that the failure was not the result of an intentional disregard of the requirements of RESPA (for purposes of determining the penalty).

(iii) *Review of the record.* The Administrative Law Judge will review the evidence submitted by the servicer, if any, and that submitted by the Department. The Administrative Law Judge shall make a determination based upon a review of the written record, except that the Administrative Law Judge may order an oral hearing if he or she finds that the determination turns on the credibility or veracity of a witness, or that the matter cannot be resolved by review of the documentary evidence. If the Administrative Law Judge decides that an oral hearing is appropriate, then the procedural rules set forth at 24 CFR part 30, subpart E, shall apply, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with this section.

(iv) *Burden of Proof.* The burden of proof or the burden of going forward with the evidence shall be upon the proponent of an action. The Department's submission of evidence that the servicer's system of records lacks information that the servicer submitted the escrow account statement(s) to the borrower(s) shall satisfy the Department's burden. Upon the Department's presentation of evidence of this lack of information in the servicer's system of records, the burden of proof shifts from the Secretary to the servicer to provide evidence that it submitted the statement(s) to the borrower.

(v) *Standard of Proof.* The standard of proof shall be the preponderance of the evidence.

(5) *Determination of the Administrative Law Judge.*

(i) Following the hearing or the review of the written record, the Administrative Law Judge shall issue a decision that shall contain findings of fact, conclusions of law, and the amount of any penalties imposed. The decision shall include a determination of whether the servicer has failed to submit any required statements and, if so, whether the servicer's failure was the result of an intentional disregard for the law's requirements.

(ii) The Administrative Law Judge shall issue the decision to all parties within 30 days of the submission of the evidence or the post-hearing briefs, whichever is the last to occur.

(iii) The decision of the Administrative Law Judge shall constitute the final decision of the Department and shall be final and binding on the parties.

(6) *Judicial review.* (i) A person against whom the Department has imposed a civil money penalty under this part may obtain a review of the Department's final decision by filing a written petition for a review of the record with the appropriate United States district court.

(ii) The petition must be filed within 30 days after the decision is filed with the Chief Docket Clerk, Office of Administrative Law Judges.

(7) *Collection of penalties.* (i) If any person fails to comply with the Department's final decision imposing a civil money penalty, the Secretary, if the time for judicial review of the decision has expired, may request the Attorney General to bring an action in an appropriate United States district court to obtain a judgment against the person that has failed to comply with the Department's final decision.

(ii) In any such collection action, the validity and appropriateness of the

Department's final decision imposing the civil penalty shall not be subject to review in the district court.

(iii) The Secretary may obtain such other relief as may be available, including attorney fees and other expenses in connection with the collection action.

(iv) Interest on and other charges for any unpaid penalty may be assessed in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3717.

(8) *Offset.* In addition to any other rights as a creditor, the Secretary may seek to collect a civil money penalty through administrative offset.

(9) At any time before the decision of the Administrative Law Judge, the Secretary and the servicer may enter into an administrative settlement. The settlement may include provisions for interest, attorney's fees, and costs related to the proceeding. Such settlement will terminate the appearance before the Administrative Law Judge.

(o) *Discretionary payments.* Any borrower's discretionary payment (such as credit life or disability insurance) made as part of a monthly mortgage payment is to be noted on the initial and annual statements. If a discretionary payment is established or terminated during the escrow account computation year, this change should be noted on the next annual statement. A discretionary payment is not part of the escrow account unless the payment is required by the lender, in accordance with the definition of "settlement service" in § 3500.2, or the servicer chooses to place the discretionary payment in the escrow account. If a servicer has not established an escrow account for a federally related mortgage loan and only receives payments for discretionary items, this section is not applicable.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2502-0501)

§ 3500.18 Validity of contracts and liens.

Section 17 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2615) governs the validity of contracts and liens under RESPA.

§ 3500.19 Enforcement.

(a) *Enforcement Policy.* It is the policy of the Secretary regarding RESPA enforcement matters to cooperate with Federal, State or local agencies having supervisory powers over lenders or other persons with responsibilities under RESPA. Federal agencies with supervisory powers over lenders may use their powers to require compliance with RESPA. In addition, failure to comply with RESPA may be grounds for administrative action by the Secretary under part 24 of this title concerning debarment, suspension, ineligibility of

contractors and grantees, or under part 25 of this title concerning the HUD Mortgagee Review Board. Nothing in this paragraph is a limitation on any other form of enforcement which may be legally available.

(b) *Violations of section 8 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2607), § 3500.14, or § 3500.15.* Any person who violates §§ 3500.14 or 3500.15 shall be deemed to violate Section 8 of RESPA and shall be sanctioned accordingly.

(c) *Violations of section 9 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2608) or § 3500.16.* Any person who violates Section 3500.16 of this part shall be deemed to violate Section 9 of RESPA and shall be sanctioned accordingly.

(d) *Investigations.* The procedures for investigations and investigational proceedings are set forth in 24 CFR part 3800.

§ 3500.21 Mortgage servicing transfers.

(a) *Definitions.* As used in this section:

Master servicer means the owner of the right to perform servicing, which may actually perform the servicing itself or may do so through a subservicer.

Mortgage servicing loan means a federally related mortgage loan, as that term is defined in § 3500.2, subject to the exemptions in § 3500.5, when the mortgage loan is secured by a first lien. The definition does not include subordinate lien loans or open-end lines of credit (home equity plans) covered by the Truth in Lending Act and Regulation Z, including open-end lines of credit secured by a first lien.

Qualified written request means a written correspondence from the borrower to the servicer prepared in accordance with paragraph (e)(2) of this section.

Subservicer means a servicer who does not own the right to perform servicing, but who does so on behalf of the master servicer.

Transferee servicer means a servicer who obtains or who will obtain the right to perform servicing functions pursuant to an agreement or understanding.

Transferor servicer means a servicer, including a table funding mortgage broker or dealer on a first lien dealer loan, who transfers or will transfer the right to perform servicing functions pursuant to an agreement or understanding.

(b) *Servicing Disclosure Statement and Applicant Acknowledgement; requirements.* (1) At the time an application for a mortgage servicing loan is submitted, or within 3 business days after submission of the application, the lender, mortgage broker who anticipates using table funding, or

dealer who anticipates a first lien dealer loan shall provide to each person who applies for such a loan a Servicing Disclosure Statement. This requirement shall not apply when the application for credit is turned down within three business days after receipt of the application. A format for the Servicing Disclosure Statement appears as Appendix MS-1 to this part. Except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the specific language of the Servicing Disclosure Statement is not required to be used, but the Servicing Disclosure Statement must include the information set out in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, including the statement of the borrower's rights in connection with complaint resolution. The information set forth in Instructions to Preparer on the Servicing Disclosure Statement need not be included on the form given to applicants, and material in square brackets is optional or alternative language.

(2) The Applicant's Acknowledgement portion of the Servicing Disclosure Statement in the format stated is mandatory. Additional lines may be added to accommodate more than two applicants.

(3) The Servicing Disclosure Statement must contain the following information, except as provided in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section:

(i) Whether the servicing of the loan may be assigned, sold or transferred to any other person at any time while the loan is outstanding. If the lender, table funding mortgage broker, or dealer in a first lien dealer loan does not engage in the servicing of any mortgage servicing loans, the disclosure may consist of a statement to the effect that there is a current intention to assign, sell, or transfer servicing of the loan.

(ii) The percentages (rounded to the nearest quartile (25%)) of mortgage servicing loans originated by the lender in each calendar year for which servicing has been assigned, sold, or transferred for such calendar year. Compliance with this paragraph (b)(3)(ii) is not required if the lender, table funding mortgage broker, or dealer on a first lien dealer loan chooses option B in the model format in paragraph (b)(4) of this section, including in square brackets the language "[and have not serviced mortgage loans in the last three years.]". The percentages shall be provided as follows:

(A) This information shall be set out for the most recent three calendar years completed, with percentages as of the end of each year. This information shall be updated in the disclosure no later than March 31 of the next calendar year. Each percentage should be obtained by

using as the numerator the number of mortgage servicing loans originated during the calendar year for which servicing is transferred within the calendar year and, as the denominator, the total number of mortgage servicing loans originated in the calendar year. If the volume of transfers is less than 12.5 percent, the word "nominal" or the actual percentage amount of servicing transfers may be used.

(B) This statistical information does not have to include the assignment, sale, or transfer of mortgage loan servicing by the lender to an affiliate or subsidiary of the lender. However, lenders may voluntarily include transfers to an affiliate or subsidiary. The lender should indicate whether the percentages provided include assignments, sales, or transfers to affiliates or subsidiaries.

(C) In the alternative, if applicable, the following statement may be substituted for the statistical information required to be provided in accordance with paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section: "We have previously assigned, sold, or transferred the servicing of federally related mortgage loans."

(iii) The best available estimate of the percentage (0 to 25 percent, 26 to 50 percent, 51 to 75 percent, or 76 to 100 percent) of all loans to be made during the 12-month period beginning on the date of origination for which the servicing may be assigned, sold, or transferred. Each percentage should be obtained by using as the numerator the estimated number of mortgage servicing loans that will be originated for which servicing may be transferred within the 12-month period and, as the denominator, the estimated total number of mortgage servicing loans that will be originated in the 12-month period.

(A) If the lender, mortgage broker, or dealer anticipates that no loan servicing will be sold during the calendar year, the word "none" may be substituted for "0 to 25 percent." If it is anticipated that all loan servicing will be sold during the calendar year, the word "all" may be substituted for "76 to 100 percent."

(B) This statistical information does not have to include the estimated assignment, sale, or transfer of mortgage loan servicing to an affiliate or subsidiary of that person. However, this information may be provided voluntarily. The Servicing Disclosure Statements should indicate whether the percentages provided include assignments, sales or transfers to affiliates or subsidiaries.

(iv) The information set out in paragraphs (d) and (e) of this section.

(v) A written acknowledgement that the applicant (and any co-applicant) has read and understood the disclosure, and understand that the disclosure is a required part of the mortgage application. This acknowledgement shall be evidenced by the signature of the applicant and any co-applicant.

(4) The following is a model format, which includes several options, for complying with the requirements of paragraph (b)(3) of this section. The model format may be annotated with additional information that clarifies or enhances the model language. The lender or table funding mortgage broker (or dealer) should use the language that best describes the particular circumstances.

(i) *Model Format*: The following is the best estimate of what will happen to the servicing of your mortgage loan:

(A) *Option A*. We may assign, sell, or transfer the servicing of your loan while the loan is outstanding. [We are able to service your loan[.].] and we [will] [will not] [haven't decided whether to] service your loan.]; or

(B) *Option B*. We do not service mortgage loans[.].] [and have not serviced mortgage loans in the past three years.] We presently intend to assign, sell, or transfer the servicing of your mortgage loan. You will be informed about your servicer.

(C) As appropriate, the following paragraph may be used:

We assign, sell, or transfer the servicing of some of our loans while the loans are outstanding, depending on the type of loan and other factors. For the program for which you have applied, we expect to [assign, sell, or transfer all of the mortgage servicing][retain all of the mortgage servicing] [assign, sell, or transfer _____% of the mortgage servicing].

(ii) [Reserved]

(c) *Servicing Disclosure Statement and Applicant Acknowledgement; delivery*. The lender, table funding mortgage broker, or dealer that anticipates a first lien dealer loan shall deliver Servicing Disclosure Statements to each applicant for mortgage servicing loans. Each applicant or co-applicant must sign an Acknowledgement of receipt of the Servicing Disclosure Statement before settlement.

(1) In the case of a face-to-face interview with one or more applicants, the Servicing Disclosure Statement shall be delivered at the time of application. An applicant present at the interview may sign the Acknowledgment on his or her own behalf at that time. An applicant present at the interview also may accept delivery of the Servicing

Disclosure Statement on behalf of the other applicants.

(2) If there is no face-to-face interview, the Servicing Disclosure Statement shall be delivered by placing it in the mail, with prepaid first-class postage, within 3 business days from receipt of the application. If co-applicants indicate the same address on their application, one copy delivered to that address is sufficient. If different addresses are shown by co-applicants on the application, a copy must be delivered to each of the co-applicants.

(3) The signed Applicant Acknowledgment(s) shall be retained for a period of 5 years after the date of settlement as part of the loan file for every settled loan. There is no requirement for retention of Applicant Acknowledgment(s) if the loan is not settled.

(d) *Notices of Transfer; loan servicing*.

(1) Requirement for notice. (i) Except as provided in this paragraph (d)(1)(i) or paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section, each transferor servicer and transferee servicer of any mortgage servicing loan shall deliver to the borrower a written Notice of Transfer, containing the information described in paragraph (d)(3) of this section, of any assignment, sale, or transfer of the servicing of the loan. The following transfers are not considered an assignment, sale, or transfer of mortgage loan servicing for purposes of this requirement if there is no change in the payee, address to which payment must be delivered, account number, or amount of payment due:

(A) Transfers between affiliates;
(B) Transfers resulting from mergers or acquisitions of servicers or subservicers; and
(C) Transfers between master servicers, where the subservicer remains the same.

(ii) The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) is not required under paragraph (d) of this section to submit to the borrower a Notice of Transfer in cases where a mortgage insured under the National Housing Act is assigned to FHA.

(2) *Time of notice*. (i) Except as provided in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section:

(A) The transferor servicer shall deliver the Notice of Transfer to the borrower not less than 15 days before the effective date of the transfer of the servicing of the mortgage servicing loan;

(B) The transferee servicer shall deliver the Notice of Transfer to the borrower not more than 15 days after the effective date of the transfer; and

(C) The transferor and transferee servicers may combine their notices into

one notice, which shall be delivered to the borrower not less than 15 days before the effective date of the transfer of the servicing of the mortgage servicing loan.

(ii) The Notice of Transfer shall be delivered to the borrower by the transferor servicer or the transferee servicer not more than 30 days after the effective date of the transfer of the servicing of the mortgage servicing loan in any case in which the transfer of servicing is preceded by:

(A) Termination of the contract for servicing the loan for cause;
(B) Commencement of proceedings for bankruptcy of the servicer; or
(C) Commencement of proceedings by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) for conservatorship or receivership of the servicer or an entity that owns or controls the servicer.

(iii) Notices of Transfer delivered at settlement by the transferor servicer and transferee servicer, whether as separate notices or as a combined notice, will satisfy the timing requirements of paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

(3) *Notices of Transfer; contents*. The Notices of Transfer required under paragraph (d) of this section shall include the following information:

(i) The effective date of the transfer of servicing;

(ii) The name, consumer inquiry addresses (including, at the option of the servicer, a separate address where qualified written requests must be sent), and a toll-free or collect-call telephone number for an employee or department of the transferee servicer;

(iii) A toll-free or collect-call telephone number for an employee or department of the transferor servicer that can be contacted by the borrower for answers to servicing transfer inquiries;

(iv) The date on which the transferor servicer will cease to accept payments relating to the loan and the date on which the transferee servicer will begin to accept such payments. These dates shall either be the same or consecutive days;

(v) Information concerning any effect the transfer may have on the terms or the continued availability of mortgage life or disability insurance, or any other type of optional insurance, and any action the borrower must take to maintain coverage;

(vi) A statement that the transfer of servicing does not affect any other term or condition of the mortgage documents, other than terms directly related to the servicing of the loan; and

(vii) A statement of the borrower's rights in connection with complaint resolution, including the information set forth in paragraph (e) of this section. Appendix MS-2 of this part illustrates a statement satisfactory to the Secretary.

(4) *Notices of Transfer; sample notice.* Sample language that may be used to comply with the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section is set out in Appendix MS-2 of this part. Minor modifications to the sample language may be made to meet the particular circumstances of the servicer, but the substance of the sample language shall not be omitted or substantially altered.

(5) *Consumer protection during transfer of servicing.* During the 60-day period beginning on the effective date of transfer of the servicing of any mortgage servicing loan, if the transferor servicer (rather than the transferee servicer that should properly receive payment on the loan) receives payment on or before the applicable due date (including any grace period allowed under the loan documents), a late fee may not be imposed on the borrower with respect to that payment and the payment may not be treated as late for any other purposes.

(e) *Duty of loan servicer to respond to borrower inquiries.*

(1) *Notice of receipt of inquiry.* Within 20 business days of a servicer of a mortgage servicing loan receiving a qualified written request from the borrower for information relating to the servicing of the loan, the servicer shall provide to the borrower a written response acknowledging receipt of the qualified written response. This requirement shall not apply if the action requested by the borrower is taken within that period and the borrower is notified of that action in accordance with the paragraph (f)(3) of this section. By notice either included in the Notice of Transfer or separately delivered by first-class mail, postage prepaid, a servicer may establish a separate and exclusive office and address for the receipt and handling of qualified written requests.

(2) *Qualified written request; defined.*

(i) For purposes of paragraph (e) of this section, a qualified written request means a written correspondence (other than notice on a payment coupon or other payment medium supplied by the servicer) that includes, or otherwise enables the servicer to identify, the name and account of the borrower, and includes a statement of the reasons that the borrower believes the account is in error, if applicable, or that provides sufficient detail to the servicer regarding information relating to the servicing of the loan sought by the borrower.

(ii) A written request does not constitute a qualified written request if it is delivered to a servicer more than 1 year after either the date of transfer of servicing or the date that the mortgage servicing loan amount was paid in full, whichever date is applicable.

(3) *Action with respect to the inquiry.* Not later than 60 business days after receiving a qualified written request from the borrower, and, if applicable, before taking any action with respect to the inquiry, the servicer shall:

(i) Make appropriate corrections in the account of the borrower, including the crediting of any late charges or penalties, and transmit to the borrower a written notification of the correction. This written notification shall include the name and telephone number of a representative of the servicer who can provide assistance to the borrower; or

(ii) After conducting an investigation, provide the borrower with a written explanation or clarification that includes:

(A) To the extent applicable, a statement of the servicer's reasons for concluding the account is correct and the name and telephone number of an employee, office, or department of the servicer that can provide assistance to the borrower; or

(B) Information requested by the borrower, or an explanation of why the information requested is unavailable or cannot be obtained by the servicer, and the name and telephone number of an employee, office, or department of the servicer that can provide assistance to the borrower.

(4) *Protection of credit rating.* (i) During the 60-business day period beginning on the date of the servicer receiving from a borrower a qualified written request relating to a dispute on the borrower's payments, a servicer may not provide adverse information regarding any payment that is the subject of the qualified written request to any consumer reporting agency (as that term is defined in section 603 of the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681a).

(ii) In accordance with section 17 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2615), the protection of credit rating provision of paragraph (e)(4)(i) of this section does not impede a lender or servicer from pursuing any of its remedies, including initiating foreclosure, allowed by the underlying mortgage loan instruments.

(f) *Damages and costs.* (1) Whoever fails to comply with any provision of this section shall be liable to the borrower for each failure in the following amounts:

(i) *Individuals.* In the case of any action by an individual, an amount

equal to the sum of any actual damages sustained by the individual as the result of the failure and, when there is a pattern or practice of noncompliance with the requirements of this section, any additional damages in an amount not to exceed \$1,000.

(ii) *Class Actions.* In the case of a class action, an amount equal to the sum of any actual damages to each borrower in the class that result from the failure and, when there is a pattern or practice of noncompliance with the requirements of this section, any additional damages in an amount not greater than \$1,000 for each class member. However, the total amount of any additional damages in a class action may not exceed the lesser of \$500,000 or 1 percent of the net worth of the servicer.

(iii) *Costs.* In addition, in the case of any successful action under paragraph (f) of this section, the costs of the action and any reasonable attorneys' fees incurred in connection with the action.

(2) *Nonliability.* A transferor or transferee servicer shall not be liable for any failure to comply with the requirements of this section, if within 60 days after discovering an error (whether pursuant to a final written examination report or the servicer's own procedures) and before commencement of an action under this section and the receipt of written notice of the error from the borrower, the servicer notifies the person concerned of the error and makes whatever adjustments are necessary in the appropriate account to ensure that the person will not be required to pay an amount in excess of any amount that the person otherwise would have paid.

(g) *Timely payments by servicer.* If the terms of any mortgage servicing loan require the borrower to make payments to the servicer of the loan for deposit into an escrow account for the purpose of assuring payment of taxes, insurance premiums, and other charges with respect to the mortgaged property, the servicer shall make payments from the escrow account in a timely manner for the taxes, insurance premiums, and other charges as the payments become due, as governed by the requirements in § 3500.17(k).

(h) *Preemption of State laws.* A lender who makes a mortgage servicing loan or a servicer shall be considered to have complied with the provisions of any State law or regulation requiring notice to a borrower at the time of application for a loan or transfer of servicing of a loan if the lender or servicer complies with the requirements of this section. Any State law requiring notice to the borrower at the time of application or at

the time of transfer of servicing of the loan is preempted, and there shall be no additional borrower disclosure requirements. Provisions of State law, such as those requiring additional notices to insurance companies or taxing authorities, are not preempted by section 6 of RESPA or this section, and this additional information may be added to a notice prepared under this section, if the procedure is allowable under State law.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2502-0458)

3. Appendix A is amended by revising the heading of the appendix to read as follows:

Appendix A to Part 3500—Instructions for Completing HUD-1 and HUD-1A Settlement Statements; Sample HUD 1 and HUD 1A Statements

4. Appendix B is amended in Illustration 11, in the paragraph headed "Comments," by substituting the reference "section 3500.14(g)(1)" for the reference "Section 3500.14(g)(2)".

5. Appendix MS-2 is revised to read as follows:

BILLING CODE 4210-27-P

APPENDIX MS-2 to PART 3500

[Sample language; use business stationery or similar heading]

**NOTICE OF ASSIGNMENT, SALE, OR TRANSFER
OF SERVICING RIGHTS**

You are hereby notified that the servicing of your mortgage loan, that is, the right to collect payments from you, is being assigned, sold or transferred from _____ to _____, effective _____.

The assignment, sale or transfer of the servicing of the mortgage loan does not affect any term or condition of the mortgage instruments, other than terms directly related to the servicing of your loan.

Except in limited circumstances, the law requires that your present servicer send you this notice at least 15 days before the effective date of transfer, or at closing. Your new servicer must also send you this notice no later than 15 days after this effective date or at closing. [In this case, all necessary information is combined in this one notice].

Your present servicer is _____.
If you have any questions relating to the transfer of servicing from your present servicer call _____ [enter the name of an individual or department here] between _____ a.m. and _____ p.m. on the following days _____.
This is a [toll-free] or [collect call] number.

Your new servicer will be _____.

The business address for your new servicer is:

_____.

The [toll-free] [collect call] telephone number of your new servicer is _____. If you have any questions relating to the transfer of servicing to your new servicer call _____ [enter the name of an individual or department here] at _____ [toll free or collect call telephone number] between _____ a.m. and _____ p.m. on the following days _____.

The date that your present servicer will stop accepting payments from you is _____. The date that your new servicer will start accepting payments from you is _____. Send all payments due on or after that date to your new servicer.

[Use this paragraph if appropriate; otherwise omit] The transfer of servicing rights may affect the terms of or the continued availability of mortgage life or disability insurance or any other type of optional insurance in the following manner:

and you should take the following action to maintain coverage:

You should also be aware of the following information, which is set out in more detail in Section 6 of the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA) (12 U.S.C. 2605):

During the 60-day period following the effective date of the transfer of the loan servicing, a loan payment received by your old servicer before its due date may not be treated by the new loan servicer as late, and a late fee may not be imposed on you.

Section 6 of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2605) gives you certain consumer rights. If you send a "qualified written request" to your loan servicer concerning the servicing of your loan, your servicer must provide you with a written acknowledgment within 20 Business Days of receipt of your request. A "qualified written request" is a written correspondence, other than notice on a payment coupon or other payment medium supplied by the servicer, which includes your name and account number, and your reasons for the request. [If you want to send a "qualified written request" regarding the servicing of your loan, it must be sent to this address:

Not later than 60 Business Days after receiving your request, your servicer must make any appropriate corrections to your account, and must provide you with a written clarification regarding any dispute. During this 60-Business Day period, your servicer may not provide information to a consumer reporting agency concerning any overdue payment related to such period or qualified written request. However, this does not prevent the servicer from initiating foreclosure if proper grounds exist under the mortgage documents.

A Business Day is a day on which the offices of the business entity are open to the public for carrying on substantially all of its business functions.

Section 6 of RESPA also provides for damages and costs for individuals or classes of individuals in circumstances where servicers are shown to have violated the requirements of that Section. You should seek legal advice if you believe your rights have been violated.

[INSTRUCTIONS TO PREPARER: Delivery means placing the notice in the mail, first class postage prepaid, prior to 15 days before the effective date of transfer (transferor) or prior to 15 days after the effective date of transfer (transferee). However, this notice may be sent not more than 30 days after the effective date of the transfer of servicing rights if certain emergency business situations occur. See 24 CFR § 3500.21(d)(1)(ii). "Lender" may be substituted for "present servicer" where appropriate. These instructions should not appear on the format.]

PRESENT SERVICER [Signature not required]

Date

[and][or]

FUTURE SERVICER [Signature not required]

Date

Dated: March 6, 1996.

Nicolas P. Retsinas,

*Assistant Secretary for Housing-Federal
Housing Commissioner,*

[FR Doc. 96-6511 Filed 3-25-96; 8:45 am]

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