

(ix)(A) A payment by an employer to its *bona fide* employee for the referral of settlement service business to a settlement service provider that has an affiliate relationship with the employer or in which the employer has a direct or beneficial ownership interest of more than 1 percent, if the following conditions are met:

(1) The employee does not perform settlement services in any transaction; and

(2) Before the referral, the employee provides to the person being referred a written disclosure in the format of the Controlled Business Arrangement Disclosure Statement, set forth in appendix D to this part.

(B) For purposes of this paragraph (g)(1)(ix), the marketing of a settlement service or product of an affiliated entity, including the collection and conveyance of information or the taking of an application or order for an affiliated entity, does not constitute the performance of a settlement service. Under this paragraph (g)(1)(ix), marketing of a settlement service or product may include incidental communications with the consumer after the application or order, such as providing the consumer with information about the status of an application or order; marketing shall not include serving as the ongoing point of contact for coordinating the delivery and provision of settlement services.

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§ 3500.15 Affiliated business arrangements.

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

(b) *Violation and exemption.* An affiliated 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. Paragraph (b)(1) of this section shall not apply to the extent it is inconsistent with section 8(c)(4)(A) of RESPA (12 U.S.C. 2607(c)(4)(A)).

(1) The person making each referral has provided to each person whose business is referred a written disclosure, in the format of the Affiliated 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 an affiliated 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.

[61 FR 13233, Mar. 26, 1996, as amended at 61 FR 29252, June 7, 1996; 61 FR 58476, Nov. 15, 1996]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 61 FR 29252, June 7, 1996, §3500.15 was amended by revising the introductory text of paragraph (b)(1), effective Oct. 7, 1996. At 61 FR 51782, Oct. 4, 1996, the effective date was delayed until further notice. For the convenience of the user, the new text is set forth as follows:

§ 3500.15 **Controlled business arrangements.**

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(b) * * *

(1) Prior to the referral, the person making a 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. This disclosure shall specify the nature of the relationship (explaining the ownership and financial interest) between the person performing settlement services (or business incident thereto) and the person making the referral, and shall describe the estimated charge or range of charges (using the same terminology, as far as practical, as section L of the HUD-1 or HUD-1A settlement statement) generally made by the provider of settlement services. The disclosure must be provided on a separate piece of paper no later than the time of each referral or, if the lender requires the use of a particular provider, the time of loan application, except that:

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§ 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. A HUD Public Guidance Document entitled "Consumer Disclosure for Voluntary Escrow Account Payments" provides a model disclosure format that originators and servicers are encouraged, but not required, to provide to consumers when the originator or servicer anticipates a substantial increase in disbursements from the escrow account after the first year of the loan. The disclosures in that model format may be combined with or included in the Initial Escrow Account Statement required in §3500.17(g).

(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 E 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).