

**Chapter 3
VENDORS**

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Chapter 3 VENDORS

3.01 Introduction

This chapter provides the administrative procedures and guidelines for working with vendors that provide goods and services to Veterans participating in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program.

3.02 References and Resources

Laws: Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996

Regulations: VA Acquisition Regulation (VAAR) 801.601

VA Forms Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet

3.03 General Information

All payments for services provided to Veterans who are participating in the VR&E Program are made through the Government's Financial Management System (FMS). Vendors who provide a service to the Government must be vendorized by submitting either a Tax Identification Number (TIN) or Social Security Number (SSN) to FMS before the Treasury Department will release a payment through this system. Vendorization is the process that allows vendors to be entered into FMS and is a prerequisite to processing payments for facilities, contractors and other service providers. Do not vendorize a facility, contractor, or other service provider if the service is being purchased with the government purchase card.

It is important to remember if involved in the vendorization process that VR&E staff who have not been delegated contracting authority must not commit the Government to the purchase of services, supplies, or equipment. While a case manager or other staff member may be involved in the process of determining the quality, quantity and delivery requirements for specific purchases, he/she must not sign contracts or agreements committing the Government to a purchase or make verbal commitments to a purchase. According to VAAR 801.601(b), individuals making such commitments or acting beyond the scope of their authority may be held financially liable.

3.04 Vendorization

a. Purpose

Training facilities must be vendorized, or set up in the FMS by the Vendorizing Unit (0473A1) in Austin, Texas so that payments can be made for services. Provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 require that the majority of Federal payments be made by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet (see Appendix O, VA Forms) requires vendors to provide financial institution information (account number and routing number) so that the funds can be deposited electronically.

b. Procedures

The following steps must be followed to vendorize a facility, contractor, or service provider:

1. VR&E staff may send the Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet to a vendor. This should be done when a vendor is selected to provide a service.
2. The vendor must complete the Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet and return it to VR&E staff. VR&E staff should inform the vendor that the vendorization process will be delayed unless all of the information indicated on the form is provided. VR&E staff should also ensure that all requests contain the VR&E station number, phone number and station point of contact so that the vendorization process is completed in a timely manner.
3. Once the completed Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet has been returned by the vendor, VR&E staff must sign and date the form where indicated or the request will not be processed. The signature should be same as the station point of contact listed on the form.
4. VR&E staff must fax the Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet to the Vendorizing Unit at the Financial Servicing Center (FSC) in Austin, Texas using the following fax number: (512) 460-5221. The Vendorizing Unit's routing symbol is 0473A1. The Corporate WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet should be submitted at the time the contract or agreement is made with the vendor so that invoices can be processed quickly and easily.
5. The Vendorizing Unit (0473A1) will set up the vendor in FMS in approximately three to four days from receipt of the faxed Corporate

WINRS FMS Vendorizing Sheet. VR&E staff should check the Custom Vendor Reference Data Screen 2 (VEN2 table) in FMS to make sure that the vendor has been set up in FMS. To inquire about the status of a vendorizing request that has been faxed to Austin, contact the Vendorizing Help Desk (VHD) at 512-460-5049 or send an email inquiry to vafscvendot@mail.va.gov.

3.05 Vendorization of Multiple Locations of Same Facility

In some situations a vendor may have established centralized accounts to receive payment for services provided to Veterans who are training either on-line or at a ground facility. It is important to select the correct facility location for enrollment authorization, invoice processing and for selecting the correct zip code for use in processing the Post-9/11 rate of subsistence allowance. The locations and addresses are displayed in CWINRS via the Alternate Address Indicator (AAI) on the FMS Lookup screen. The AAI is a two-digit number used by FMS to designate a vendor's payment address. If an AAI is no longer used in FMS, it will not be shown.

When involved in the vendorization process, it is important for VR&E staff to work closely with vendors with multiple locations. Prior to faxing a vendorizing request to the Vendorizing Unit, the following essential information must be confirmed:

- a. The facility code that covers the location.
- b. The payment address for the facility.
- c. The mailing address for the facility and other contact information.

3.06 Treasury Offset Program (TOP)

Under the provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, the Treasury Department is authorized to intercept payments (except for benefits) made by federal agencies, through FMS, to vendors for services if that vendor has an unresolved financial debt with the United States Government. When the debt number is matched to the TIN or SSN, the payment may be intercepted by TOP.

VR&E staff may receive inquiries from vendors about past or current payments that are missing. The following information resources may be used to help determine whether the payment was offset by TOP or is missing for other reasons:

- a. VA Financial Services Center, Austin, TX (FSC) records a transaction OS-15 in FMS that will notify Regional Offices when a payment has been offset by TOP.
- b. FSC staffs a customer service toll free line (1-877-353-9791) and will provide information to include the debt number and the amount of offset.
- c. FSC provides a check tracing service that can be initiated in a local VA Regional Office when the payment does not appear to have been offset by TOP.

Uninterrupted service to Veterans participating in the VR&E Program is essential to positive rehabilitation outcomes. VR&E staff are encouraged to assist vendors in determining the reasons for missing payments. When the reason for missing payments is TOP offset, vendors should be advised to work directly with the Department of Treasury to resolve any issues. The Department of Treasury provides toll free debt management service at 1-800-304-3107.