

A Step-by-Step Guide for Providing Comments on Department of Veterans Affairs National Standards of Practice on Regulations.gov

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Overview

This document is intended to provide the public, including Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), non-profits, and professional associations/trade organizations, with guidance and information regarding the process of commenting on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national standards of practice on the Federal Register through the Regulations.gov website.

Note:

- *VA employees should post their feedback and concurrences through internal VA mechanisms for policy review.*
- *Congress and State Licensing Boards and certification/registration Bodies will work directly with VA to provide feedback.*

Public participation is appreciated as it will help VA ensure the quality of the national standards of practice. VA will make appropriate revisions, in light of the comments, including those that present evidence-based practice and alternatives that help VA meet our mission and goals, and that are better for Veterans or VA health care professionals. VA will give serious consideration to all comments received.

Commenting as an Individual

This section outlines a step-by-step guide for providing comments as an individual and not a VA employee. Commenters can also watch a [visual instruction](#) on how to submit a comment.

Note: VA employees should not comment via the Federal Register. Following VA's standard for internal policy review by employees, VA is using an internal employee SharePoint to ensure all VA employee feedback is reviewed in conjunction with public comment on the Federal Register. If you are a VA employee and would like to comment on the national standards of practice, please navigate to the National Standards of Practice Employee Participation and Review site page via VA SharePoint. Please note VA employee comments made via Regulations.gov will be withdrawn.

To submit a public comment on the VA national standard of practice notice as an individual:

1. Find the national standards of practice you wish to comment on.

Find the docket ID and title of the national standard of practice on the [VA National Standards of Practice public website](#). You will be directed to the webpage pictured below (Figure 1). Find the national standard of practice and click the link.

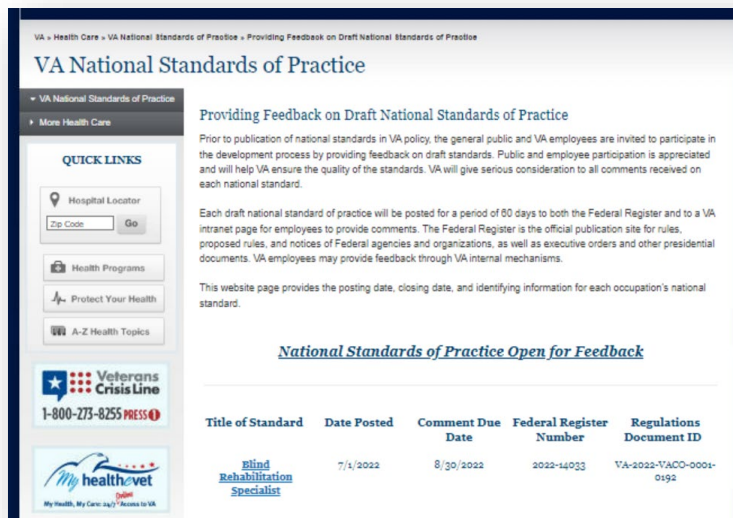


FIGURE 1

2. Or visit [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

Alternatively, visit [the Regulations.gov homepage](https://www.regulations.gov) and enter the Federal Register number or Regulations Document ID number of the national standard of practice into the search bar (see Figure 2).

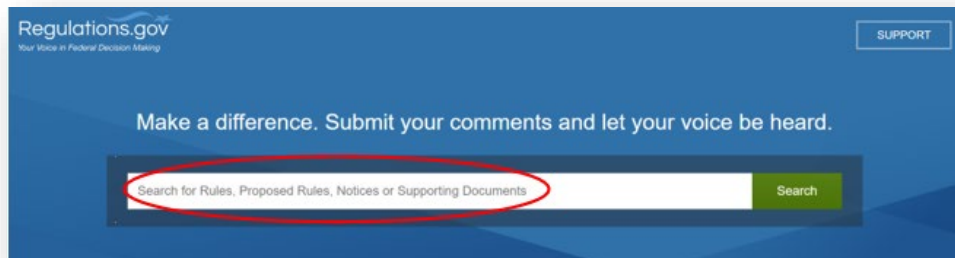


FIGURE 2

Select the relevant national standard of practice from the search results (see Figure 3).

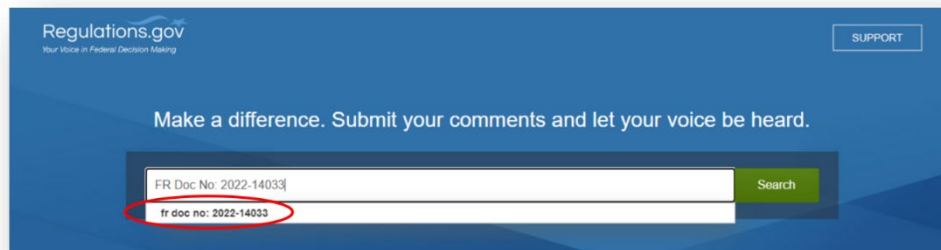


FIGURE 3

3. Navigate to the comment box.

Following either step 1 or 2, you will be directed to a document open for comment. To leave a comment, click the comment button (see Figure 4). The comment page will then open in the same browser window.



FIGURE 4

The number of days remaining in the comment period will appear at the top-right corner of the comment page (see Figure 5), and the comment due date on the left-hand side of the document (see Figure 6). Be sure to leave your comment before the comment period ends. Please note: all national standards of practice will be available for comment for 60 days.

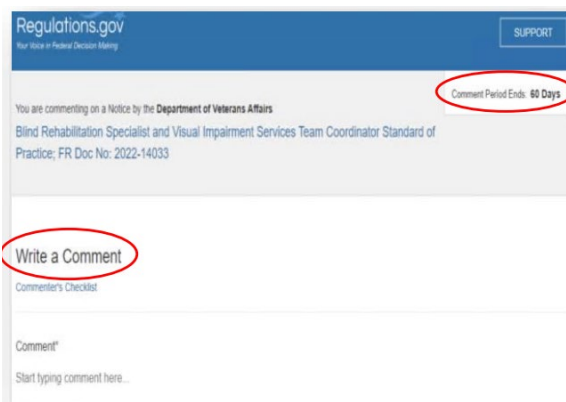


FIGURE 5

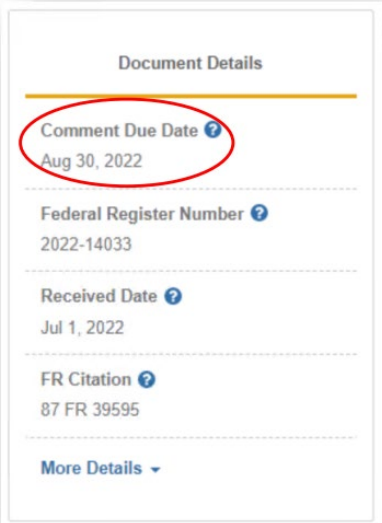


FIGURE 6

4. Provide your comment in the comment box.

When commenting, include the title of the notice, the specific national standard of practice you are referencing, and the docket ID number. Referencing the name and ID number links your comment with the national standard of practice notice. There is a 5,000-character limit on comments. For tips on how to submit an effective comment, please review the [Commenter's Checklist PDF](#) on Regulations.gov under supporting and related material.

5. Next, self-identify.

While providing your name, email address or other personally identifiable information (PII) is optional, you must select one of three identities: an individual, an organization, or anonymous. Select the option to best describe the identity under which you would like to submit your comment (see Figure 7). If you select "an individual," you are required to enter your first and last name. Comments submitted as "Anonymous" are still viewable when posted to the docket.

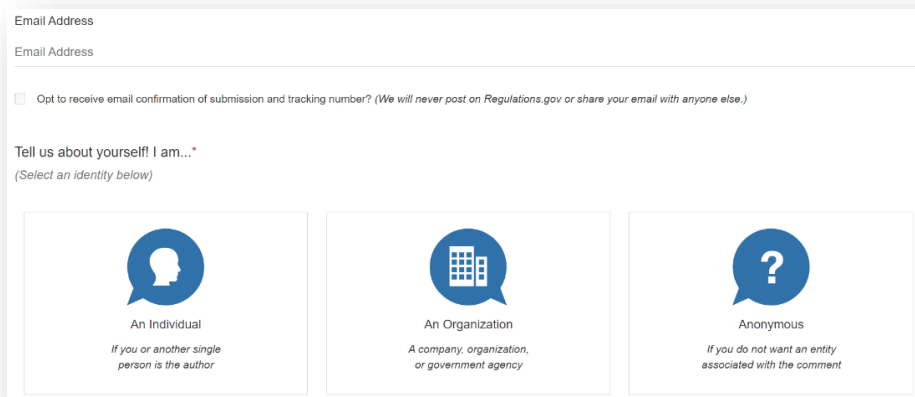


FIGURE 7

6. Submit your comment.

Process reCAPTCHA and click the submit button (see Figure 8).

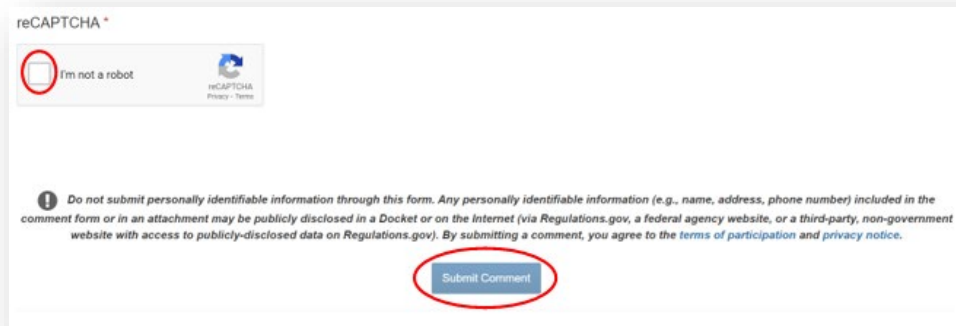


FIGURE 8

After submitting your comment, the “Success” screen will appear which contains a “Comment Tracking Number”. To save your number for future reference, you can print the webpage and email the Comment Tracking Number to yourself, or you can click the email opt-in button on the comment form prior to finalizing your submission to receive a confirmation email regarding your submission.

Commenting as an Organization or Association

This section outlines a step-by-step guide for providing comments as an organization. For comments made on behalf of an organization, there is a [visual instruction](#) on how to submit a comment.

Form Letters

Organizations may choose to encourage their members to submit form letters designed to address common issues. If you choose to distribute a form letter to the members of your organization, please instruct individual members to review steps 1 through 6 for [Commenting as an Individual](#) on this document. At step 4, the individual(s) should include the form letter provided by the organization.

Bulk Upload

An organization or association may choose to collect comments on behalf of their members and submit the comments on Regulations.gov. If your organization chooses to do a bulk upload:

7. Navigate to the draft national standard you wish to comment on.

Follow steps 1 through 3 for [Commenting as an Individual](#).

8. Summarize the comments.

At step 4, the organization should provide a comment to summarize or reflect what members' comments are.

9. Upload the comments.

After step 4, the organization can upload up to twenty files of no more than 10MB each (see Figure 9). Select the file(s) you want to attach. The name of the file(s) will appear in the File Name field in the Upload file browser.

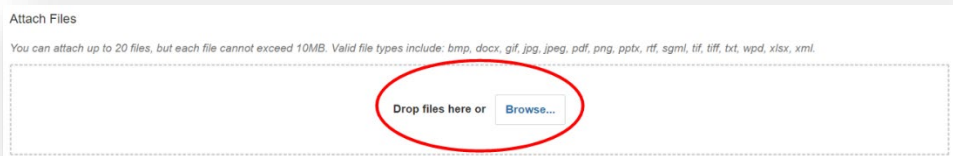


FIGURE 9

Regulations.gov accepts the following file types: .bmp, .docx, .gif, .jpeg, .jpg, .pdf, .png, .pptx, .rtf, .sgml, .tif, .tiff, .txt, .wpd, .xlsx, .xml. If you are uploading more than one attachment to the comment web form, it is recommended you use the following file titles:

- a. Attachment1_<insert title of document>
- b. Attachment2_<insert title of document>

This standardized file naming convention will help agency reviewers distinguish your submitted attachments and aid in the comment review process. If a file contains multiple submissions, click "Yes" in the multiple submission field and indicate how many submissions are included in the file.

10. Submit the comments.

An "Organization Type" must then be chosen from the drop-down menu, followed by the organization's name. Submit the comment and attachments by processing reCAPTCHA and clicking the submit button. Keep a copy of your comment in a separate file to ensure you do not lose your comment if you have a problem submitting it on Regulations.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the Federal Register?

The Federal Register is the official publication for rules and notices of Federal agencies and organizations.

What is regulations.gov?

Regulations.gov is your source for information on the development of Federal regulations and other related documents issued by the U.S. government. Through this site, you can find, read, and comment on regulatory issues important to you.

What are notices?

A notice includes documents that announce new programs or agency policies.

What are VA's national standards of practice?

VA's national standards of practice are a standardized set of services that all health care professionals in a given occupation can perform regardless of what is permitted by a State license, certification, or registration. The services or tasks are incorporated into the individual's privileges, scope of practice, or functional statement, if the facility performs such services and the individual has the proper education, training, and skill. To learn more about the national standards of practice, please visit the [VA National Standards of Practice public website](#).

What is a docket and docket ID?

A docket is a collection of documents made available by an agency for public viewing. Often associated with an opportunity for public comment, dockets consist of materials used in a rulemaking or other agency action. These may include documents specifically referenced in the Federal Register, public comments received, and other information used by the agency to explain or support its decisions. Dockets are categorized as being either rulemaking or non-rulemaking dockets. Each department and agency manage its own data within the website according to agency-specific regulatory policy.

A docket number, also known as a docket ID, follows a regulation throughout its rulemaking process and is assigned by the agency promulgating the regulation. You can use the docket number to track down the docket folder for your regulation of interest.

Why is providing comments to notices important?

Public participation, such as providing comment on the VA notice, will help ensure the quality of the national standards of practice. Any person, group, organization — including non-profit organizations and lobbying groups — or other federal agency with a legitimate interest can submit a public comment on notices. Comments may be submitted anonymously. VA will make appropriate revisions, in light of the comments, including those that present evidence-based practice and alternatives that help VA meet our mission and goals, and that are better for Veterans or VA health care

professionals. Internal and external stakeholder input are integral to the development process and we will continue to provide opportunities for internal and external stakeholders to provide feedback. All draft national standards will be published in the Federal Register for a 60-day public comment period.

What happens to the PII included in my comment?

Any PII (e.g., name, address, phone number) included in the comment form or in an attachment may be publicly disclosed in a docket or on the Internet (via Regulations.gov, a federal agency website, or a third-party, non-government website with access to publicly disclosed data on Regulations.gov).

What happens after I submit my comment?

After submission, your comment will be reviewed by the VA for content and posted to Regulations.gov. Reasons the VA might choose not to post the comment can include:

- The comment is part of a mass submission campaign or is a duplicate.
- The comment is incomplete.
- The comment is not related to the notice.
- The comment has been identified as spam.
- The comment is submitted by a VA employee.
- The comment contains profanity or other inappropriate language.
- The submitter requested the comment not be posted.

Your comment may not be immediately posted to Regulations.gov. Certain regulations may have thousands of comments and reviewing could take several weeks before it may be viewed online.

How do I find my comment?

Once reviewed, your comment is publicly viewable on Regulations.gov. The best way to find your comment is to enter your Comment Tracking Number in the search bar on the Regulations.gov homepage. Alternatively, you can navigate to the Comment Browser tab on the national standard of practice and search for your comment by using your comment tracking number or your name if you included it in your submission.

How do I find other comments made on the national standard of practice?

When viewing the Document Details page on the national standard of practice, you will see a tab for “Browse All Comments.” If the national standard of practice has received comments and the agency has posted the comments for public viewing, you will see a comment count. You can click on the “Browse All Comments” tab to view all comments.

Why should VA employees comment on the national standards of practice through the internal policy review mechanisms?

Following VA’s standard for internal policy review by employees, VA is using an internal employee SharePoint to ensure all VA employee feedback is reviewed in conjunction with public comment on the Federal Register. If you are a VA employee and would like to comment on the national standards of practice, please navigate to the National Standards of Practice Employee Participation and Review site page via VA SharePoint. Please note VA employee comments made via Regulations.gov will be withdrawn.

Additional resources:

1. [About the Federal Register](#)
2. [Learn About the Regulatory Process](#)
3. [The Federal Register's Tips for Submitting Effective Comments](#)
4. [Regulations.gov FAQ](#)
5. [Department of Health and Human Services: How to Participate in the Rulemaking Process](#)
6. [Regulations.gov User Notice](#)

Disclaimer: This document is intended to serve as a guide; it is not intended and should not be considered as legal advice. Please seek counsel from a lawyer if you have legal questions or concerns.

**[38 CFR 17.419](#) confirms VA's authority under the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution to allow VA health care professionals to practice their VA health care occupation in any State and for VA to develop National Standards of Practice for each occupation irrespective of conflicting State requirements.*