

amount of the penalty or penalties by levy or a proceeding in court.

(d) *Effective date.* The provisions of this section are effective as of December 19, 1989.

[T.D. 8382, 56 FR 67519, Dec. 31, 1991, T.D. 8382, 57 FR 6061, Feb. 19, 1992]

**§ 1.6695-1 Other assessable penalties with respect to the preparation of income tax returns for other persons.**

(a) *Failure to furnish copy to taxpayer.*

(1) A person who is an income tax return preparer of any return of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code or claim for refund of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code and who fails to satisfy the requirements imposed by section 6107(a) and § 1.6107-1 (a) and (c) to furnish a copy of the return or claim for refund to the taxpayer (or nontaxable entity), shall be subject to a penalty of \$50 for such failure, with a maximum penalty of \$25,000 per person imposed with respect to each calendar year, unless it is shown that the failure is due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect. Thus, no penalty may be imposed under section 6695(a) and this paragraph (a)(1) upon a person who is an income tax return preparer solely by reason of—

(i) Section 301.7701-15 (a)(2) and (b) on account of having given advice on specific issues of law; or

(ii) Section 301.7701-15(b)(3) on account of having prepared the return solely because of having prepared another return which affects amounts reported on the return.

(2) No penalty may be imposed under section 6695(a) and paragraph (a)(1) of this section upon an income tax return preparer who furnishes a copy of the return or claim for refund to a taxpayer:

(i) Who holds an elected or politically appointed position with the government of the United States or a State or political subdivision thereof; and

(ii) Who, in order faithfully to carry out his official duties, has so arranged his affairs that he has less than full knowledge of the property which he holds or of the debts for which he is responsible, if information is deleted

from the copy in order to preserve or maintain this arrangement.

(b) *Failure to sign return.* (1) Unless the Secretary has prescribed another method of signing pursuant to § 301.6061-1(b) of this chapter on or after July 21, 1995, an individual who is an income tax return preparer with respect to a return of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code (Code) or claim for refund of tax under subtitle A of the Code shall manually sign the return or claim for refund (which may be a photocopy) in the appropriate space provided on the return or claim for refund after it is completed and before it is presented to the taxpayer (or nontaxable entity) for signature. Except as provided in paragraphs (b)(4) (iii) and (iv) of this section, an individual preparer may not satisfy this requirement by use of a facsimile signature stamp or signed gummed label. If the preparer is unavailable for signature, another preparer shall review the entire preparation of the return or claim for refund, and then shall manually sign the return or claim for refund.

(2) If more than one income tax return preparer is involved in the preparation of the return or claim for refund, the individual preparer who has the primary responsibility as between or among the preparers for the overall substantive accuracy of the preparation of such return or claim for refund shall be considered to be the income tax return preparer for purposes of this paragraph.

(3) The application of paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section is illustrated by the following examples:

*Example (1).* X law firm employs Y, a lawyer, to prepare for compensation returns and claims for refund of taxes. X is employed by T, a taxpayer, to prepare his 1977 Federal tax return. X assigns Y to prepare T's return. Y obtains the information necessary for completing the return from T and makes determinations with respect to the proper application of the tax laws to such information in order to determine T's tax liability. Y then forwards such information to C, a computer tax service which performs the mathematical computations and prints the return form by means of computers. C then sends the completed return to Y who reviews the accuracy of the return. Y is the individual preparer who is primarily responsible for the

overall accuracy of T's return. Y must sign the return as preparer.

*Example (2).* X partnership is a national accounting firm which prepares for compensation returns and claims for refund of taxes. A and B, employees of X, are involved in preparing the 1977 tax return of T Corporation. After they complete the return, including the gathering of the necessary information, the proper application of the tax laws to such information, and the performance of the necessary mathematical computations, C, a supervisory employee of X, reviews the return. As part of this review, C reviews the information provided and the application of the tax laws to this information. The mathematical computations and carried-forward amounts are proved by D, an employee of X's comparing and proving department. The policies and practices of X require that P, a partner, finally review the return. The scope of P's review includes reviewing the information provided by applying to this information his knowledge of T's affairs, observing that X's policies and practices have been followed, and making the final determination with respect to the proper application of the tax laws to determine T's tax liability. P may or may not exercise these responsibilities, or may exercise them to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the degree of complexity of the return, his confidence in C (or A and B), and other factors. P is the individual preparer who is primarily responsible for the overall accuracy of T's return. P must sign the return as preparer.

*Example (3).* C corporation maintains an office in Seattle, Washington, for the purpose of preparing for compensation returns and claims for refund of taxes. C makes compensatory arrangements with individuals (but provides no working facilities) in several States to collect information from taxpayers and to make determinations with respect to the proper application of the tax laws to the information in order to determine the tax liabilities of such taxpayers. E, an individual, who has such an arrangement in Los Angeles with C, collects information from T, a taxpayer, and completes a worksheet kit supplied by C which is stamped with E's name and an identification number assigned to E by C. In this process, E classifies this information in appropriate income and deduction categories for the tax determination. The completed worksheet kit signed by E, is then mailed to C. D, an employee in C's office, reviews the worksheet kit to make sure it was properly completed. D does not review the information obtained from T for its validity or accuracy. D may, but did not, make the final determination with respect to the proper application of tax laws to the information. The data from the worksheet is entered into a computer and the return form is completed. The return is prepared for submission to T with filing instructions. E is the indi-

vidual preparer primarily responsible for the overall accuracy of T's return. E must sign the return as preparer.

*Example (4).* X employs A, B, and C to prepare income tax returns for taxpayers. After A and B have collected the information from the taxpayer and applied the tax laws to the information, the return form is completed by computer service. On the day the returns prepared by A and B are ready for their signatures, A is away from the city for 1 week on another assignment and B is on detail to another office for the day. C may sign the returns prepared by A, provided that (i) C reviews the information obtained by A relative to the taxpayer, and (ii) C reviews the preparation of each return prepared by A. C may not sign the returns prepared by B because B is available.

(4)(i) The manual signature requirement of paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section may be satisfied by a photocopy of a copy of the return or claim for refund which copy is manually signed by the preparer after completion of its preparation. After a copy of the return or claim for refund is signed by the preparer and before it is photocopied, no person other than the preparer may alter any entries on the copy other than to correct arithmetical errors discernible on the return or claim for refund. The employer of the preparer or the partnership in which the preparer is a partner, or the preparer (if not employed or engaged by a preparer and not a partner of a partnership which is a preparer), must retain the manually signed copy of the return or claim for refund. In the alternative, for a return or claim for refund presented to a taxpayer for signature after December 31, 1998, and for returns or claims for refund retained on or before that date, the person required to retain the manually signed copy of the return or claim for refund may choose to retain a photocopy of the manually signed copy of the return or claim for refund, or use an electronic storage system to store and produce a copy of the manually signed return or claim for refund. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(4)(i), an electronic storage system must meet the electronic storage system requirements prescribed in section 4 of Rev. Proc. 97-22 (1997-1 C.B. 652) (see §601.601(d)(2) of this chapter) or other procedures prescribed by the

Commissioner. A record of any arithmetical errors corrected must be retained and made available upon request by the person required to retain the manually signed copy of the return or claim for refund.

(ii) If mechanical preparation of the return or claim for refund is accomplished by computer not under the control of the individual preparer, then the manual signature requirement of paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section may be satisfied by a manually signed attestation by the individual preparer attached to the return or claim for refund that all the information contained in the return or claim for refund was obtained from the taxpayer and is true and correct to the best of his knowledge, but only if that information (including any supplemental written information provided and signed by the preparer) is not altered on the return or claim for refund by another person. For purposes of the preceding sentence, the correction of arithmetical or clerical errors, discernible from the information submitted by the preparer does not constitute an alteration. The information submitted by the preparer shall be retained by the employer of the preparer or by the partnership in which the preparer is a partner, or by the preparer (if not employed or engaged by a preparer and not a partner in a partnership which is a preparer). A record of any arithmetical or clerical errors corrected shall be retained by the person required to retain the information submitted by the preparer and made available upon request.

(iii) A preparer of a return or claim for refund for a nonresident alien individual taxpayer who is authorized to sign the return or claim for refund for the taxpayer may satisfy the manual signature requirement of paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section by a facsimile signature if the preparer is permitted to use a facsimile signature in signing the return or claim for refund for the taxpayer. This subdivision (iii) shall apply only if the preparer submits to the Internal Revenue Service with the returns or claims for refund bearing the preparer's facsimile signature a letter, manually signed by the preparer, identifying by taxpayer name and identification number each return

or claim for refund bearing the facsimile signature and declaring that the facsimile signature appearing on these returns or claims for refund is the signature used by the preparer to sign these documents. After the facsimile signature is affixed, no person other than the preparer may alter any entries on the return or claim for refund other than to correct arithmetical errors discernible on the return or claim for refund. The employer of the preparer or the partnership in which the preparer is a partner, or the preparer (if not employed or engaged by a preparer and not a partner in a partnership which is a preparer) shall retain a manually signed copy of the letter submitted to the Internal Revenue Service with the returns or claims for refund. A record of any arithmetical errors corrected shall be retained by the person required to retain the manually signed letter and made available upon request.

(iv) A preparer of a fiduciary return may satisfy the manual signature requirement of paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section by a facsimile signature only if the preparer submits to the Internal Revenue Service with the returns bearing the preparer's facsimile signature a letter, manually signed by the preparer, identifying by taxpayer name and identification number each return bearing the facsimile signature and declaring under penalties of perjury that the facsimile signature appearing on these returns is the signature used by the preparer to sign these documents. After the facsimile signature is affixed, no person other than the preparer may alter any entries on the return other than to correct arithmetical errors discernible on the return. The employer of the preparer or the partnership in which the preparer is a partner, or the preparer (if not employed or engaged by a preparer and not a partner in a partnership which is a preparer), shall retain a manually signed copy of the letter submitted to the Internal Revenue Service with the returns. A record of any arithmetical errors corrected shall be retained by the person required to keep the manually signed letter and that person shall make the record available to the Internal Revenue Service upon request. The

preparer of a fiduciary claim for refund may not satisfy the manual signature requirement of paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section by a facsimile signature.

(v) Any items required to be retained and kept available for inspection under paragraph (b)(4) (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of this section shall be retained and kept available for inspection for the same period that the material described in §1.6107-1(b) must be retained and kept available for inspection.

(vi) If the district director, service center director, or compliance center director (director) determines that a preparer or preparers have abused the permissive signature rules of this paragraph (b)(4), such as by altering the return or claim for refund after signature (in contravention of paragraph (b)(4)(i) of this section), by altering information on the return or claim for refund after attestation (in contravention of paragraph (b)(4)(ii) of this section), or by failing to comply with the provisions of paragraph (b)(4) (iii) or (iv) of this section, then the director may, by written notice, prospectively deny to the preparer or preparers the right to use the permissive signature rules of this paragraph (b)(4).

(5) An individual required by this paragraph (b) to sign a return or claim for refund shall be subject to a penalty of \$50 for each failure to sign, with a maximum of \$25,000 per person imposed with respect to each calendar year, unless it is shown that the failure is due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect. For purposes of this paragraph (b), reasonable cause is a cause which arises despite ordinary care and prudence exercised by the individual preparer. Thus, no penalty may be imposed under section 6695(b) and this paragraph (b) upon a person who is an income tax return preparer solely by reason of—

(i) Section 301.7701-15(a)(2) and (b) on account of having given advice on specific issues of law; or

(ii) Section 301.7701-15(b)(3) on account of having prepared the return solely because of having prepared another return which affects amounts reported on the return.

If the preparer asserts reasonable cause for failure to sign, the Service shall re-

quire a written statement in substantiation of the preparer's claim of reasonable cause.

(c) *Failure to furnish identifying number.* (1) A person who is an income tax return preparer of any return of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code or claim for refund of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code and who fails to satisfy the requirement of section 6109(a)(4) and §1.6109-2(a) to furnish one or more identifying numbers of preparers on a return or claim for refund shall be subject to a penalty of \$50 for each failure, with a maximum of \$25,000 per person imposed with respect to each calendar year, unless it is shown that the failure is due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect. Thus, no penalty may be imposed under section 6695(c) and this paragraph (c)(1) upon a person who is an income tax return preparer solely by reason of—

(i) Section 301.7701-15 (a)(2) and (b) on account of having given advice on specific issues of law; or

(ii) Section 301.7701-15(b)(3) on account of having prepared the return solely because of having prepared another return which affects amounts reported on the return.

(2) No penalty may be imposed under section 6695(c) and paragraph (c)(1) of this section upon:

(i) A preparer who is employed (or engaged) by a person who is also a preparer of the return or claim for refund, or

(ii) A preparer who is a partner in a partnership which is also a preparer of the return or claim for refund.

(3) No more than one penalty of \$50 may be imposed under section 6695(c) and paragraph (c)(1) of this section with respect to a single return or claim for refund.

(d) *Failure to retain copy or record.* (1) A person who is an income tax return preparer of any return of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or claim for refund of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and who fails to satisfy the requirements imposed upon him by section 6107(b) and §1.6107-1 (b) and (c) (other than the record requirement described in both §1.6107-1(b) (2) and (3)) to retain and make available a

copy of the return or claim for refund, or to include the return or claim for refund in a record of returns and claims for refund and make the record available for inspection, shall be subject to a penalty of \$50 for the failure, unless it is shown that the failure is due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect. Thus, no penalty may be imposed under section 6695(d) and this paragraph (d)(1) upon a person who is an income tax return preparer solely by reason of:

(i) Section 301.7701-15 (a)(2) and (b) on account of having given advice on specific issues of law; or

(ii) Section 301.7701-15(b)(3) on account of having prepared the return solely because of having prepared another return which affects amounts reported on the return.

(2) A person may not, for returns or claims for refund presented to the taxpayers (or nontaxable entities) during any single return period, be subject to more than \$25,000 in penalties under section 6695(d) and paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(e) *Failure to file correct information returns.* A person who is subject to the reporting requirements of section 6060 and § 1.6060-1 and who fails to satisfy these requirements shall pay a penalty of \$50 for each such failure, with a maximum of \$25,000 per person imposed for each calendar year, unless such failure was due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect.

(f) *Negotiation of check.* (1) No person who is an income tax return preparer may endorse or otherwise negotiate, directly or through an agent, a check for the refund of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 which is issued to a taxpayer other than the preparer if the person was a preparer of the return or claim for refund which gave rise to the refund check.

(2) Section 6695(f) and paragraph (f)(1) and (3) of this section do not apply to a preparer-bank which—

(i) Cashes a refund check and remits all of the cash to the taxpayer or accepts a refund check for deposit in full to a taxpayer's account, so long as the bank does not initially endorse or negotiate the check (unless the bank has

made a loan to the taxpayer on the basis of the anticipated refund); or

(ii) Endorses a refund check for deposit in full to a taxpayer's account pursuant to a written authorization of the taxpayer (unless the bank has made a loan to the taxpayer on the basis of the anticipated refund).

A preparer-bank may also subsequently endorse or negotiate a refund check as a part of the check-clearing process through the financial system after initial endorsement or negotiation.

(3) The preparer shall be subject to a penalty of \$500 for each endorsement or negotiation of a check prohibited under section 6695(f) and paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(g) *Effective date.* This section applies to income tax returns and claims for refund presented to a taxpayer for signature after December 31, 1998, and for returns or claims for refund retained on or before that date.

[T.D. 7519, 42 FR 59969, Nov. 23, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7640, 44 FR 49452, Aug. 23, 1979; T.D. 8549, 59 FR 33432, June 29, 1994; T.D. 8689, 61 FR 65320, Dec. 12, 1996; T.D. 8803, 63 FR 72182, Dec. 31, 1998; T.D. 8893, 65 FR 44437, July 18, 2000]

**§ 1.6695-2 Preparer due diligence requirements for determining earned income credit eligibility.**

(a) *Penalty for failure to meet due diligence requirements.* A person who is an income tax return preparer (preparer) of an income tax return or claim for refund under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code with respect to determining the eligibility for, or the amount of, the earned income credit (EIC) under section 32 and who fails to satisfy the due diligence requirements of paragraph (b) of this section will be subject to a penalty of \$100 for each such failure. However, no penalty will be imposed under section 6695(g) on a person who is an income tax return preparer solely by reason of—

(1) Section 301.7701-15(a)(2) and (b) of this chapter, on account of having given advice on specific issues of law; or

(2) Section 301.7701-15(b)(3) of this chapter, on account of having prepared the return solely because of having prepared another return that affects amounts reported on the return.