§ 903.2 Suspension of collection activity.

(a) Agencies may suspend collection activity on a debt when:

(1) The agency cannot locate the debtor;

(2) The debtor’s financial condition is expected to improve; or

(3) The debtor has requested a waiver or review of the debt.

(b) Based on the current financial condition of the debtor, agencies may suspend collection activity on a debt when the debtor’s future prospects justify retention of the debt for periodic review and collection activity and:

(1) The applicable statute of limitations has not expired; or

(2) Future collection can be effected by administrative offset, notwithstanding the expiration of the applicable statute of limitations for litigation of claims, with due regard to the 10-year limitation for administrative offset prescribed by 31 U.S.C. 3716(e)(1); or

(3) The debtor agrees to pay interest on the amount of the debt on which collection will be suspended, and such suspension is likely to enhance the debtor’s ability to pay the full amount of the principal of the debt with interest at a later date.

(c)(1) Agencies shall suspend collection activity during the time required for consideration of the debtor’s request for waiver or administrative review of the debt if the statute under which the request is sought prohibits the agency from collecting the debt during that time.

(2) If the statute under which the request is sought does not prohibit collection activity pending consideration of the request, agencies may use discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to suspend collection. Further, an agency ordinarily should suspend collection action upon a request for waiver or review if the agency is prohibited by statute or regulation from issuing a refund of amounts collected prior to agency consideration of the debtor’s request. However, an agency should not suspend collection when the agency determines that the request for waiver or review is frivolous or was made primarily to delay collection.

(d) When an agency learns that a bankruptcy petition has been filed with respect to a debtor, in most cases the collection activity on a debt must be suspended, pursuant to the provisions of 11 U.S.C. 362, 1201, and 1301, unless the agency can clearly establish that the automatic stay has been lifted or is no longer in effect. Agencies should seek legal advice immediately from their agency counsel and, if legally permitted, take the necessary legal steps to ensure that no funds or money are paid by the agency to the debtor until relief from the automatic stay is obtained.

§ 903.3 Termination of collection activity.

(a) Agencies may terminate collection activity when:

(1) The agency is unable to collect any substantial amount through its own efforts or through the efforts of others;

(2) The agency is unable to locate the debtor;

(3) Costs of collection are anticipated to exceed the amount recoverable;

(4) The debt is legally without merit or enforcement of the debt is barred by any applicable statute of limitations;

(5) The debt cannot be substantiated; or

(6) The debt against the debtor has been discharged in bankruptcy.

(b) Before terminating collection activity, the agency should have pursued all appropriate means of collection and determined, based upon the results of the collection activity, that the debt is uncollectible. Termination of collection activity ceases active collection of the debt. The termination of collection activity does not preclude the agency
§ 903.4 Exception to termination.

When a significant enforcement policy is involved, or recovery of a judgment is a prerequisite to the imposition of administrative sanctions, agencies may refer debts for litigation even though termination of collection activity may otherwise be appropriate.

§ 903.5 Discharge of indebtedness; reporting requirements.

(a) Before discharging a delinquent debt (also referred to as a close out of the debt), agencies shall take all appropriate steps to collect the debt in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3711(g), including, as applicable, administrative offset, tax refund offset, Federal salary offset, referral to Treasury, Treasury-designated debt collection centers or private collection contractors, credit bureau reporting, wage garnishment, litigation, and foreclosure. Discharge of indebtedness is distinct from termination or suspension of collection activity under part 903 of this title and is governed by the Internal Revenue Code. When collection action on a debt is suspended or terminated, the debt remains delinquent and further collection action may be pursued at a later date in accordance with the standards set forth in this chapter. When an agency discharges a debt in full or in part, further collection action is prohibited. Therefore, agencies should make the determination that collection action is no longer warranted before discharging a debt. Before discharging a debt, agencies must terminate debt collection action.

(b) Section 3711(i), title 31, United States Code, requires agencies to sell a delinquent nontax debt upon termination of collection action if the Secretary determines such a sale is in the best interests of the United States. Since the discharge of a debt precludes any further collection action (including the sale of a delinquent debt), agencies may not discharge a debt until the requirements of 31 U.S.C. 3711(i) have been met.

(c) Upon discharge of an indebtedness, agencies must report the discharge to the IRS in accordance with the requirements of 26 U.S.C. 6050P and 26 CFR 1.6050P–1. An agency may request Treasury or Treasury-designated debt collection centers to file such a discharge report to the IRS on the agency’s behalf.

(d) When discharging a debt, agencies must request that litigation counsel release any liens of record securing the debt.