Internal Revenue Service, Treasury

§ 1.104–1

Compensation for injuries or sickness.

(a) In general. Section 104(a) provides an exclusion from gross income with respect to certain amounts described in paragraphs (b), (c), (d) and (e) of this section, which are received for personal injuries or sickness, except to the extent that such amounts are attributable to (but not in excess of) deductions allowed under section 213 (relating to medical, etc., expenses) for any prior taxable year. See section 213 and the regulations thereunder.

(b) Amounts received under workmen’s compensation acts. Section 104(a)(1) excludes from gross income amounts which are received by an employee under a workmen’s compensation act (such as the Longshoremen’s and Harbor Workers’ Compensation Act, 33 U.S.C. c. 18), or under a statute in the nature of a workmen’s compensation act which provides compensation to employees for personal injuries or sickness incurred in the course of employment. Section 104(a)(1) also applies to compensation which is paid under a workmen’s compensation act to the survivor or survivors of a deceased employee. However, section 104(a)(1) does not apply to a retirement pension or annuity to the extent that it is determined by reference to the employee’s age or length of service, or the employee’s prior contributions, even though the employee’s retirement is occasioned by an occupational injury or sickness. Section 104(a)(1) also does not apply to amounts which are received as compensation for a nonoccupational injury or sickness nor to amounts received as compensation for an occupational injury or sickness to the extent that they are in excess of the amount provided in the applicable workmen’s compensation act or acts. See, however, §§1.105–1 through 1.105–5 for rules relating to exclusion of such amounts from gross income.

(c) Damages received on account of personal physical injuries or physical sickness—(1) In general. Section 104(a)(2) excludes from gross income the amount of any damages (other than punitive damages) received (whether by suit or agreement and whether as lump sums or as periodic payments) on account of personal physical injuries or physical sickness. Emotional distress is not considered a physical injury or physical sickness. However, damages for emotional distress attributable to a physical injury or physical sickness are excluded from income under section 104(a)(2). Section 104(a)(2) also excludes damages not in excess of the amount paid for medical care (described in section 213(d)(1)(A) or (B)) for emotional distress. For purposes of this paragraph (c), the term damages means an amount received (other than workers’ compensation) through prosecution of a legal suit or action, or through a settlement agreement entered into in lieu of prosecution.

(2) Cause of action and remedies. The section 104(a)(2) exclusion may apply to damages recovered for a personal physical injury or physical sickness under a statute, even if that statute does not provide for a broad range of remedies. The injury need not be defined as a tort under state or common law.

(3) Effective/applicability date. This paragraph (c) applies to damages paid pursuant to a written binding agreement, court decree, or mediation award entered into or issued after September 13, 1995, and received after January 23, 2012. Taxpayers also may apply these final regulations to damages paid pursuant to a written binding agreement, court decree, or mediation award entered into or issued after September 13, 1995, and received after August 20, 1996. If applying these final regulations to...
damages received after August 20, 1996, results in an overpayment of tax, the taxpayer may file a claim for refund before the period of limitations under section 6511 expires. To qualify for a refund of tax on damages paid after August 20, 1996, under a written binding agreement, court decree, or mediation award entered into or issued after September 13, 1995, a taxpayer must meet the requirements of section 1605 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, Public Law 104–188 (110 Stat. 1838).

(d) Accident or health insurance. Section 104(a)(3) excludes from gross income amounts received through accident or health insurance for personal injuries or sickness (other than amounts received by an employee, to the extent that such amounts (1) are attributable to contributions of the employer which were not includible in the gross income of the employee, or (2) are paid by the employer). Similar treatment is also accorded to amounts received under accident or health plans and amounts received from sickness or disability funds. See section 105(e) and §1.105–5. If, therefore, an individual purchases a policy accident or health insurance out of his own funds, amounts received thereunder for personal injuries or sickness are excludable from his gross income under section 104(a)(3). See, however, section 213 and the regulations thereunder as to the inclusion in gross income of amounts attributable to deductions allowed under section 213 for any prior taxable year. Section 104(a)(3) also applies to amounts received by an employee for personal injuries or sickness from a fund which is maintained exclusively by employee contributions. Conversely, if an employer is either the sole contributor to such a fund, or is the sole purchaser of a policy of accident or health insurance for his employees (on either a group or individual basis), the exclusion provided under section 104(a)(3) does not apply to any amounts received by his employees through such fund or insurance. If the employer and his employees contribute to a fund or purchase insurance which pays accident or health benefits to employees, section 104(a)(3) does not apply to amounts received thereunder by employees to the extent that such amounts are attributable to the employer’s contributions. See §1.105–1 for rules relating to the determination of the amount attributable to employer contributions. Although amounts paid by or on behalf of an employer to an employee for personal injuries or sickness are not excludable from the employee’s gross income under section 104(a)(3), they may be excludable therefrom under section 105. See §§1.105–1 through 1.105–5, inclusive. For treatment of accident or health benefits paid to or on behalf of a self-employed individual by a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt under section 501(a) or under a plan described in section 403(a), see paragraph (g) of §1.72–15.

(e) Amounts received as pensions, etc., for certain personal injuries or sickness. (1) Section 104(a)(4) excludes from gross income amounts which are received as a pension, annuity, or similar allowance for personal injuries or sickness resulting from active service in the armed forces of any country, or in the Coast and Geodetic Survey, or the Public Health Service. For purposes of this section, that part of the retired pay of a member of an armed force, computed under formula No. 1 or 2 of 10 U.S.C. 1401, or under 10 U.S.C. 1402(d), on the basis of years of service, which exceeds the retired pay that he would receive if it were computed on the basis of percentage of disability is not considered as a pension, annuity, or similar allowance for personal injury or sickness, resulting from active service in the armed forces of any country, or in the Coast and Geodetic Survey, or the Public Health Service. For purposes of this section, that part of the retired pay of a member of an armed force, computed under formula No. 1 or 2 of 10 U.S.C. 1401, or under 10 U.S.C. 1402(d), on the basis of years of service, which exceeds the retired pay that he would receive if it were computed on the basis of percentage of disability is not considered as a pension, annuity, or similar allowance for personal injury or sickness, resulting from active service in the armed forces of any country, or in the Coast and Geodetic Survey, or the Public Health Service. For purposes of this section, that part of the retired pay of a member of an armed force, computed under formula No. 1 or 2 of 10 U.S.C. 1401, or under 10 U.S.C. 1402(d), on the basis of years of service, which exceeds the retired pay that he would receive if it were computed on the basis of percentage of disability is not considered as a pension, annuity, or similar allowance for personal injury or sickness, resulting from active service in the armed forces of any country, or in the Coast and Geodetic Survey, or the Public Health Service. For purposes of this section, that part of the retired pay of a member of an armed force, computed under formula No. 1 or 2 of 10 U.S.C. 1401, or under 10 U.S.C. 1402(d), on the basis of years of service, which exceeds the retired pay that he would receive if it were computed on the basis of percentage of disability is not considered as a pension, annuity, or similar allowance for personal injury or sickness, resulting from active service in the armed forces of any country, or in the Coast and Geodetic Survey, or the Public Health Service.

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§ 1.105–1 Amounts attributable to employer contributions.

(a) In general. Under section 105(a), amounts received by an employee through accident or health insurance for personal injuries or sickness must be included in his gross income to the extent that such amounts (1) are attributable to contributions of the employer which were not includible in the gross income of the employee, or (2) are paid by the employer, unless such amounts are excluded therefrom under section 105(b), (c), or (d). For purposes of this section, the term “amounts received by an employee through an accident or health plan” refers to any amounts received through accident or health insurance, and also to any amounts which, under section 105(e), are treated as being so received. See §1.105–5. In determining the extent to which amounts received for personal injuries or sickness by an employee through an accident or health plan are subject to the provisions of section 105(a), rather than section 104(a)(3), the provisions of paragraphs (b), (c), (d), and (e) of this section shall apply. A self-employed individual is not an employee for purposes of section 105 and §§1.105–1 through 1.105–5. See paragraph (g) of §1.72–15. Thus, such an individual will not be treated as an employee with respect to benefits described in section 105 received from a plan in which he participates as an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) at the time he, his spouse, or any of his dependents becomes entitled to receive such benefits.

(b) Noncontributory plans. All amounts received by employees through an accident or health plan which is financed solely by their employer, either by payment of premiums on an accident or health insurance policy (whether on a group or individual basis), by contributions to a fund which pays accident or health benefits, or by direct payment of the benefits under the plan, are subject to the provisions of section 105(a), except to the extent that they are excludable under section 105(b), (c), or (d). This rule may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. Employer A maintains a plan for his employees which provides that he will continue to pay regular wages to employees who are absent from work due to sickness or personal injuries. Employees make no contributions to the plan and all benefits are paid by the employer. Amounts received by employees under the plan are subject to section 105(a), and must be included in gross income unless excluded therefrom under section 105(b), (c), or (d).

Example 2. Pursuant to a State nonoccupational disability benefits law, employer B maintains an accident and health plan for his employees. Although under the State law B is authorized to withhold from his employees’ wages a specified amount for employee contributions to the State fund, in actual practice B does not so withhold and makes all contributions out of his own funds. All amounts received by B’s employees from the State fund are subject to section 105(a), and must be included in gross income unless excluded therefrom under section 105(b), (c), or (d).

(c) Contributory plans. (1) In the case of amounts received by an employee through an accident or health plan which is financed partially by his employer and partially by contributions of the employee, section 105(a) applies to the extent that such amounts are attributable to contributions of the employer which were not includible in the